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ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

POLITICAL ECONOMY.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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THE CHARMED SEA.

BERKELEY THE BANKER.—PART I.

BERKELEY THE BANKER.—PART II.

27642

IN NINE VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

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THE CHARMED SEA.

Chapter I.

SONG IN A STRANGE LAND.

"These, then, are the mountains," said a Russian officer to one of a band of armed Siberian peasants, appointed to guard a company of exiles who were on their way, some to the mines of Nertchinsk, and others to be attached to the soil as serfs, wheresoever the governor of Irkutsk should please. "These, then, are the mountains, and here they cross the frontier, to give work to the Emperor's enemies, in digging out their gold and silver."

"Yes, those are the mountains, and within them lies the Charmed Sea," replied the peasant, who, however, did not trouble himself so much as even to look up towards the peaks, now beginning to wax dim in the long northern twilight. This man lived in the next hamlet, and traversed this road almost every day, as did his companions; for, though the Russian officer had accompanied the exiles all the way from Poland, the peasant guard was changed from village to village.

"Call the prisoners forward, and make way,"

ordered the officer: and the peasants, who had not felt it necessary to trouble themselves much about their charge in a region where escape was next to impossible, now began to look how far off the prisoners might be, and ran to urge the men on foot to greater speed, and to lash the tired horse of the kibitka in which the women were seated.

At the first glance the men looked all alike, their heads being shaved, and their dress uniform in its sordidness. It required a little observation to discover that some were old and others young; which of them bore the wrinkles of care, and which of years also. A still closer observation was necessary to distinguish the respective rank and quality of those who externally so nearly resembled each other. No Siberian serfs looked so toil-worn and poverty-stricken; but neither did any husbandmen in all the Emperor's dominions display such countenances as those of some of the company appeared, when they could be viewed without reference to the disfigurement of the rest of their persons.

The women in the kibitka appeared alarmed at the signal to make speed; of the men, some ran on, under an impulse of curiosity, as fast as the weight they carried would permit; the rest preserved the slow and steady pace at which they had been walking since they came in sight. Every other man shouldered an iron bar, with a short chain at each end, and all were, at present, marching in silence.

"Make haste!" cried the Russian, shaking

his lance, impatiently. "You march as if you had still a thousand miles to go; but there, among those mountains, is Nertchinsk, and we are close by the lake, where we are to halt for the governor's orders about some of you."

"You will not cross the testy sea to-night," observed one of the peasants. "The spirits let no boat get back safe after dark."

"That depends on who crosses it," observed another of the escort. "If some call it the testy sea, others call it the charmed sea. Sometimes it foams and gathers its waters into a heap when not a breath is stirring; but, just as often, it is as smooth as glass while the pines are stooping and shivering on all the hills around. Learn who it is that the spirits favour, and who it is that they hate, and then you will know whether a boat will go straight across, like an eagle flying home, or whether it will turn over and over in the water, like an eider duck shot under the wing."

"Hold your tongues, slaves," cried the officer. "Here, you other slaves; let me hear you thank the Emperor for sending you here, where grass grows under your feet, instead of ordering you into Kamtchatka."

In answer, the exiles uplifted one of the patriotic chaunts, of which the loyal ears of their guard had long been weary :—

"Our Poland mourns,—
She shall not die!
Her watch-fire burns,
And help is nigh.
Her ruffled eagle speeds from shore to shore,
Till nations rise to bid her weep no more."

"Wretches!" cried the Russian, "how dare you abuse the Emperor's clemency? Will your treason never be silent?"

"Never," replied a young Pole, "to judge by the look of the place we are coming to. There must be echoes enough among these rocks to tell the tale from eve to morning, and from morning to eve again. In the steppe we have passed, our voices were stifled in space; but among these mountains the plaint of Poland shall never die."

"I will silence it," growled the officer.

"Not by threats," replied Ernest. "The Emperor has wrought his will upon us; we have no more to fear from singing our country's songs, and we will sing them."

"You carry your bar on your shoulder," said the Russian. "You shall all be chained to it by the wrists as before, unless you cease to blaspheme the Emperor."

Ernest, the young Pole, cast a glance behind him, and seeing the exhaustion of his friend Taddeus, who had been lately crippled, and the fatigue of Owzin, the father of Taddeus, and of old Alexander, the feeblest of the party, he had compassion on them, and refrained from answering the tyrant who had it as much in his will as his power to fetter them, though no chance of escape afforded him a pretence for doing so. In order to remind them of their present position in relation to himself, the officer addressed them by the new titles which he had never yet been able to get them to recognize.

"Three! you will sink in the marsh presently, if you do not keep the line. Halt, there, Seven! If you get on so fast I will shoot you. Two! no shifting your bar yet. You have not had your fair share of it."

His words were wasted. Owzin still straggled from the line. Ernest strode on as fast as ever, and Taddeus persisted in resigning his load to his stronger companion, Paul, who walked by his side. A volley of oaths from the Russian, or rather one indecent oath repeated a dozen times, seemed likely to be succeeded by blows from the attendant peasants, when a woman's voice was heard above the creaking of the kibitka.

"Husband, do try to remember your number, that I and your children may not see you murdered before our faces. Taddeus, my son, if you can bear your load no farther, say so. Is it manly to bring new sufferings on us all by irritating those whom we cannot resist? Ask for relief, since you want it."

Taddeus could not bring himself to do this; but he cast a submissive look towards his mother, and took his burden again from Paul, who was not sorry, being eager to run forwards to see as much as Ernest of the pass they were approaching.

Lenore silently descended from the kibitka, charged herself with the load of her crippled son, who was too weak and weary to resist, and sent him to occupy her place beside his sister. The

Russian looked on surprised, but did not interfere with the arrangement.

Of all this miserable group, none, probably,—not even their parents,—were so wretched as the brother and sister, who now sat side by side for the first time since they had left Poland. During the whole of the journey they had avoided each other, though, till of late, no two members of one family had mutually loved more tenderly. But, henceforth, Sophia had a quarrel with her brother, which could, she believed, never be reconciled; and the spirit of Taddeus, was grieved as much by his sister's injustice as by his own remorse. Sophia had long been betrothed to Cyprian, a friend of both her brothers; and there had been hope that the marriage might shortly take place in peace, as Cyprian had borne little share in the troubles of the times, and had the character, in his provincial residence, of being a quiet citizen. But this scheme of happiness was unconsciously broken up by Taddeus.

In accordance with the Russian Emperor's new rule, that every family, where there were two sons, should spare one to his majesty's armies, Taddeus, described as an active young rebel, had been drafted into one of the condemned regiments which was to guard the frontiers of Siberia. His brother, Frederick, was a theological student in the university at Wilna, fit for something so much better than being a private soldier, under the severest discipline, in a desert country, that Taddeus generously ac-

quiesced in the lot having fallen on himself, and prepared to go into ignominious exile,—with whatever heart-burnings,—with an appearance of submission. But when, not long after, tidings came that Frederick had passed the frontiers, and was safe in France, the resolution of Taddeus was at once changed. Now that he was sure of not endangering his brother, he felt that it would be easier to him to die than to enter the armies of the ravager of his country; and he did,—what was then no uncommon act,—he crippled himself so as to be unfit for military service. In consideration to his parents, he left it to his enemies to take his life, if they should so choose. He was willing to have it spared as long as that of his father. But it required all his resolution to refrain from laying violent hands on himself when he discovered the result of his manœuvre. The commissioners whom he had cheated, found it necessary to make up, as rapidly as possible, the 20,000 recruits that were to be brought from Poland, and also to allow no instance of evasion to escape punishment; and, in order to accomplish both these objects at once, and as Frederick was beyond their reach, they seized upon Cyprian, as one who was almost a member of the family. Before the fact could be made known at Warsaw, or, consequently, any measure of prevention or remonstrance could be taken, Cyprian was marching far away in the interior of Russia, and confidence was broken down between the brother and sister for ever. It would have been difficult

to say which was the most altered by this event. Sophia, who had always been gay and amiable, and of late made hopeful amidst the woes of her country by the faith which happy love cherishes in the heart, seemed to have suddenly lost the capacity of loving. She hated, or was indifferent. Her indifference was towards her parents, and most who crossed her daily path: her hatred was not only towards the enemies of her country, but towards an individual here and there who could not be conceived to have given her any cause of offence, or to have obtained any great hold on her mind. The passion appeared as capricious as it was vehement. No one could declare that it extended to her brother, for towards him alone her conduct was cautious. Her one object, as far as he was concerned, seemed to be avoidance; and he did not cross her in it, for he felt that he had much reason to be hurt at her conduct, as well as grieved at the consequences of his own. The only point in which they now seemed to agree was in shunning mutual glances and speech. This had been easy from the day when the doom of banishment fell on the whole family, for supposed political offences. During all the days of their weary journey of four thousand miles, they had been able to keep apart; Sophia preferring to walk when she saw that her brother must soon ask a place in the kibitka; and it being the custom of her mother, herself, and a little girl who was under their charge, a daughter of one of the exiles, to appropriate a corner of the post-house where they

stopped for the night, apart from the rest of the band of travellers.

Now that they were at length side by side, they proceeded in perfect silence. Taddeus folded his arms, and Sophia looked another way. It was some relief that little Clara was present, and that she talked without ceasing. She was allowed to go on unanswered, till she observed that mamma (for so she called Lenore) must be very tired with having carried the iron bar so long.

"What are you talking about, child? Paul is carrying the one Taddeus had."

When Clara explained that Lenore had carried it till that moment, Sophia cast a look of indignant contempt upon her brother, who was equally surprised, supposing that his mother had only taken his burden from him to hand it to some one else.

"Have patience, Sophia," he said, as he let himself down from the carriage. "You will none of you have to bear my burdens long."

He looked so desperate, that the apprehension crossed Sophia's mind that he meant to rid himself of his life and his miseries altogether, perhaps by means of the very iron bar which was the subject of dispute. Whatever might have been his intention, however, he was prevented from executing it, for he fell in a swoon as soon as he left hold of the carriage, and was replaced in it, as his marching any farther was out of the question that day. As his mother sat, wiping the moisture from his forehead while he rested his

head against her knees,—as she looked on her children, and saw that their misfortunes were further embittered by the absence of mutual confidence,—it required all the fortitude of the woman to bear up against the anguish of the mother.

It was a relief to all when they at length arrived at their halting-place, on the banks of that extraordinary lake on which no stranger can look without being awed or charmed. As the procession emerged from a rocky pass, upon the very brink of the waters, the peasants carelessly took off their caps, and immediately resumed them, being too much accustomed to the prospect before them to be much affected by it, except when their terrors were excited by storms, or by any other of the phenomena of the charmed sea which they were wont to ascribe to the presence of spirits. Now, this vast lake, extending to the length of 360 miles, and more than 40 miles broad, lay dark in the bosom of the surrounding mountains, except where a gleam of grey light fell here and there from their openings upon its motionless surface. Not a movement was seen through the whole circuit of the vast panorama, and not a sound was heard. If there were bears in the stunted pine woods on the mountain side, or aquatic birds on the opposite margin, or eagles among the piled rocks that jutted into the waves, they were now hidden and still. If there were ever boats plying on the lake, they were now withdrawn into the coves and creeks of the shore. If there were human beings whose superstition was not too strong

to permit them to live beside the very haunt of the invisible powers, their courage upheld them only while the sun was above the horizon. As soon as the shadows of twilight began to settle down, they hastened homewards, and avoided looking abroad till they heard the inferior animals moving, in sign, as it was supposed, of the spirits having retired. Neither man, woman, nor child was to be seen, therefore, at this moment, and it was difficult to imagine any, so perfect a solitude did the place appear. As soon as the peasants perceived this, they began to quake, and gathered round the Russian, with whispered entreaties to be allowed to return homewards instantly. This being angrily refused till a shelter should have been found for the whole party, the poor creatures, divided between their fear of an officer of the Emperor and of invisible spirits, prepared themselves for a somewhat unusual method of march. They took off their caps again, crossed themselves every moment, and walked with their backs to the lake, carefully shunning any appearance of a glance over either shoulder. Their consternation was at its height when their prisoners broke the silence by singing, as before,—

"Our Poland mourns,—
She shall not die!
Her watch-fire burns,
And help is nigh.
Her ruffled eagle speeds from shore to shore,
Till nations rise to bid her weep no more."

Before the last echo had died away, a gurgling,

rushing sound came from a distance, and those who gazed upon the expanse of waters saw a prodigious swell approaching from the north-east, and rolling majestically towards them, slowly enough to afford the strange spectacle of half the lake in a state of storm, and the other half as smooth as glass. Presently, the whole was surging, tossing, foaming, roaring, while not a breath of air was at first felt by those on the shore. Next followed a flapping of wings overhead, for the eagles were roused; and a prodigious cackling and hurry-scurry in the marshes on either hand, for the wild-fowl were alarmed; and a crashing of boughs among the firs in the background, whether by a rising wind, or by wild beasts, could not be known. Then the clouds were parted, and the stars seemed to scud behind them; the fogs were swept away in puffs, and the opposite shores appeared to advance or recede, according to the comparative clearness of the medium through which they were seen. By this time the peasant guards were muttering their prayers with their hands before their eyes, the officer, astounded, sat motionless in his saddle, and the Poles burst into a shout, as if they had partaken of the superstition of the country. Louder than ever arose

> "Our Poland mourns,—
> She shall not die!"

And it was not till the commotion had subsided, nearly as rapidly as it had arisen, that either threats or persuasions could induce them to stir a

step from the station they had taken up on the brink. They all wished that it might be the lot of their whole party to remain near this mighty waste of waters. Those who were destined for the mines of Nertchinsk, that is, Owzin and his family, and Andreas, the father of little Clara, were within easy reach of the Baïkal lake: but where the others, Ernest, Paul, and old Alexander, might be located as serfs, no one could guess, till the will of the governor of Irkutsk should be revealed.

Nothing was heard or seen of the invisible powers through the thick darkness which surrounded their halting-place during the whole night. How different was the face of things when that darkness fled away! By sun-rise, the officer having received his directions from Irkutsk, the whole party were on the lake in boats managed by the neighbouring fishermen, who had come forth from hidden dwellings here and there among the rocks. The snowy peaks, on the western side, looked of a glittering whiteness in the morning light, while the fir-clad mountains opposite seemed of a deeper blackness from the contrast. The waters were of all hues of green, in proportion as their depth varied from twenty to more than two hundred fathoms. In the shallower parts it might be seen that their bed was a rocky basin, with no mud, and scarcely any sand to injure the transparency of the waters, even after the most searching storm. Pillars of granite shoot up from this rocky foundation, and in sunshine

show like points of light amidst the emerald waves. The only circumstance which the boatmen could find it difficult to account for was, why fish were permitted to exist in this lake; neither did it live in the memory of man when permission was given to mortals to catch them: but some pretty traditionary stories were current respecting the last question; and as to the former, perhaps it might be an amusement to the lake-spirits to chase a finny prey among the pillars and recesses of their green-roofed sea-halls, as it is to kindred beings to follow the wild-ass among the hills, or the roebuck over the plain.

Chapter II.

TO EACH HEART ITS OWN BITTERNESS.

It happened to be the pleasure of the governor of Irkutsk that the two divisions of the band of exiles should settle near each other. This was more than either had expected. A sentence to work in the mines is usually equivalent to one of complete separation from countrymen as well as country; for, as only a limited number of miners can be employed, in comparison with serfs and soldiers, the exiles condemned to the mines run a risk of isolation proportioned to the smallness of their numbers. In the present case, the risk was lessened by the station being one from which escape was out of the question. The miners of Ekaterinburgh may dream of

getting away, even though they must cross the Uralian chain, and the whole of the interior of Russia, before they can see a friendly face, or set foot in a neutral country; and therefore they are watched, and not allowed to associate with such as speak a friendly language. But in the depths of eastern Siberia, 2000 miles further into the wilds than even the last-mentioned station, what hope of deliverance can exist? It is found the least troublesome and expensive way to leave the exiles alone, as long as they do their work and keep quiet; and there is no objection to letting them communicate, unless it should be found profitable or convenient to send on some of them a thousand miles or so, or into Kamtchatka. The governor had received intelligence from Petersburgh that a party would soon be sent through his district to Kamtchatka, and hesitated for a short time whether he should not send on this procession, and keep the next that might arrive within his jurisdiction; but, as the officer could prove by documents which he carried that Owzin and his son and Andreas were to be miners, it seemed best to trust to another arrival for Kamtchatka, and to locate the present party where work was waiting for them.

A silver mine, near the western extremity of the Daourian range, and within hearing of the waters of the Baïkal when its storms were fiercest, was the appointed station of Owzin and his little band of companions; while plots of ground, within sight of the lake, were marked out for the three who were to become crown peasants.

The whole procession was permitted to stop for a while at the future abodes of the latter, before proceeding to the almost equally forlorn dwellings of the convict miners. They had little comfort to offer each other: but the new homes might be made somewhat less desolate by being entered in company.

They were miserable places. Log-huts, consisting of one room, were thought good enough dwellings for serfs. The holes between the rough-hewn logs were stuffed with moss, which hung out in shreds, leaving spaces for the biting wind to whistle through. A bench at one end, intended to be covered with a hide, and thus to constitute a bed, and a space built round with bricks, which was to be an oven, were all the preparations for warmth in one of the severest climates in the world. An earthen pan, to cook food in, was the sole utensil provided; but Ernest was told that he might make himself a wooden platter, bowl and spoon, when he had provided a plough and harrow, the first necessaries of all, as the season was getting on. All these were to be made of wood; the harrow being a mere hurdle, with the twigs bent downward to serve as teeth, and the plough being a wooden hook, pointed with iron, and with two sticks tied on the back as tillers. Where was the necessary wood to be obtained? asked one and another; for none was to be seen but fir and pine, and a few dwarf shrubs. The oak, hazel, plane, lime, and ash had disappeared long ago, and it was some weeks since they had seen

elms and poplars. The officer only knew that other peasants had these utensils, and so the material must be within reach. It struck him that the best thing Ernest and his companions could do would be to take each a wife from among the women who would soon be sent to them for their choice. These native women could put them in the way of knowing and doing what they wanted; and it must be the best plan for their comfort, since the emperor's own clemency had suggested it.

Ernest ground his teeth in speechless fury at this proposal; but his friend Paul, who was not so apt to take things to heart, begged to know how they were to maintain their wives?

"The best fields we have passed, within some hundred miles," said he, "bear only a little winter-rye, and a few straggling oats. The potatoes are no larger than gooseberries, and not a single fruit,—not even the sour crab we have all heard of, will grow in this region. When we have a plough and harrow, will they give us food?"

"Leave it to the women to find that out," replied the officer. "You see people do live here, and so may you, if you choose to do as others do—marry, and sit down peaceably to praise the Emperor's mercy in sending you here, when he might have taken your lives."

Some one now asked if they were not to be provided with rifles, powder, and ball, as their subsistence must mainly depend on the chase. When they could purchase them, was the

reply; these things were always to be had at Irkutsk.

It was well that the governor had more humanity, and understood better the necessities of the case, than the Russian escort. With the promised assortment of native women, he sent the most needful articles for which the exiles had inquired; and Ernest's first pleasurable thought this day was of going alone into the woods with his gun, when the rest of the party should be gone, to relieve his bursting heart where none might witness his anguish. A disgusting scene, however, had to be gone through first.

On coming in from a survey of his miserable plot of ground, he found Paul amusing himself with making acquaintance with new comers, who had arrived in company with the rifles and fowling-pieces, to be examined and selected after somewhat the same manner as they. The gray-haired Alexander gazed with a grave countenance of philosophical curiosity. Sophia looked more terrified than it might have been supposed she could now ever feel; and her mother, who sat retired with her and the wondering Clara, was pale, and evidently appalled at the new society she seemed likely to be placed in. She looked eagerly for her husband and son, who were not in the hut. As soon as they appeared, she said, in a low voice,—

"Husband, this is worse than all."

"It would have been so to me, Lenore, if you had not come with me; and Sophia, too. Tadeus will not have anything to do with these

people while his mother and sister are with him."

Taddeus turned from the group at the door with no less disgust than Ernest; but it was not to meet his sister's eye. This family had no further wish to stay. They chose their implements and arms, put them into the kibitka, and begged to proceed without delay. Their companion, Andreas, allowed them to guide his movements as they would. He had a ruling passion, which he could not at present gratify; and, till he could, he remained perfectly passive.

When the adieus were spoken, amid many hopes of soon meeting again, and before the creaking kibitka was out of sight, Ernest ran and shut himself into Paul's neighbouring hut, since he could not get undisturbed possession of his own. He closed the ricketty door of deal-boards, set his back against it, rested his forehead on the butt-end of the fowling-piece he carried, and struggled in body as he had long struggled in spirit. A driving rack of thoughts swept through his brain, like the storm-clouds that he was destined to see deform many a wintry sky. Providence,—whether there be one or not, or where now hidden?—an instant recall of the doubt; Man,—why doomed to connexion with, to subservience to, man? Life,—what it is, from pole to pole—from nothing to eternity? His own life,—at his mother's knee, in college halls, in the field,—and all for this! His home, with its civilization and its luxuries;—his beloved Warsaw, with its streets thronged as in former

days, and not, as now, resounding with the voice of weeping;—the gallant army filing from its gates, and his own brave regiment, first going forth in the solemnity of its heroism, then sadly falling away when hope was over;—his own words, little thought of at the time—"My poor fellows, it is over! leave me, and save yourselves;"—all these, and a thousand other images, came in turbulent succession, almost as rapidly as the pictures of a whole life flit before the very eyes of a drowning man; and from each was breathed, as it passed, the same thought—"and all for this!" Then came efforts to endure,—to reconcile himself to be the bondsman of an enemy; and though in a desert, watched from afar with eyes of malicious triumph! As if actually at this moment beheld in his retreat from the throne of Petersburgh, Ernest drew himself up, and commanded his emotion. But again the remembrance of his country, more potent than any considerations for himself, unnerved him, and again his head sank upon his breast, and the conflict was renewed. He was roused from it by a voice at the opening which was meant to serve for a window.

"Come, Colonel, make the best of it, and take a wife while one is to be had, as I have done."

"I am going to make the best of it," replied Ernest, starting from his position, and examining the lock of his piece; "but I am not going to take a wife."

"Well, come among us, at any rate, instead

of staying in this cursed cold place: the women have got us a fire already. But, bless me! you have found the secret of „warming yourself," he continued, as Ernest came out, the perspiration yet standing on his forehead. "I beg your pardon, from the bottom of my soul, Colonel, if I have gone too far about taking a wife; if I have touched upon——"

"You have not, indeed, Paul. I was no more likely to take a wife in Warsaw than here."

"Well, I am glad of it; but I shall always need a forbearance I cannot practise. There does not seem much temptation to joke in Siberia; but see if I do not joke my friends away from me, even here, before five years are over."

"Joke away, friend, and we shall all thank you if you can keep it up for five years. But, Paul, this marrying——it is no joke. You will not, surely, give into any of the Emperor's schemes; you will not bring among us——"

"I will not be chilled, and starved, and solitary, while I can get anybody to take care of me, and keep me company," replied Paul; "and let me tell you, a Mongolian wife has accomplishments which are not to be despised by a man in my condition,—as you might see presently, if you would condescend to give a little attention to them."

Ernest looked impatient, and was turning his steps towards the woods, when Paul laid a finger on his arm, saying,

"I do not mean their white teeth and black

hair, though some of them braid it very prettily; nor yet, altogether, that they can handle the plough while one goes out shooting; but you have no conception what use they make of eye and ear, and smell and touch. They can tell in the darkest night when one comes within twenty miles of a hamlet, by the smell of smoke; and, when there is no fog, they will distinguish the tread of a bear, or the neighing of a horse, or detect the tiniest white mouse stealing to its hole, at distances that you would not dream of. Think what a help in sporting!"

"No matter," replied Ernest; "I thought you had too much disgust at being a slave yourself to wish to have one of your own."

"But, Colonel, did you ever know me use anybody ill?"

"Never, except yourself: seriously, I mean. I will not say what you have done in jest."

"The jesting happens very well in the present case; for a merrier and more sociable set than these girls I never saw. But I really mean to be very kind to my wife; and you will soon see how fond she will grow of me, and what I shall make of her."

"And when we go back to Warsaw—what then?"

"My dear fellow! you do not expect that, surely?"

"I do! And at your peril say a single word against it," said Ernest, vehemently, to his astonished companion. "Do you think I will live here? Here! hedged in with forests! buried in

snow! petrified in ice! while the tyrant watches me struggling in his snares, and laughs! No! I shall go back to Warsaw!"

"But how?—tell me how?"

"How? Step by step, if I live; in one long flight, if I die. Oh! if it should please Providence that I should die in these wastes, I will wring from Him that which I have not hitherto obtained. I will open a volcano in these wilds that shall melt all the snows between yonder lake and our own river. I will make a causeway in one night through all the steppes, and in the morning every Pole shall be marching to Petersburgh to drag the dastard——"

"Come, come," said Paul, "no more of this. I must take care of you for once, Ernest, and bid you be reasonable. You will take me for Nicholas next, and shoot me as you would him, or his likeness—a hyæna."

"Have patience with me," replied Ernest, resuming his calmness, "and leave me my own way of making the best of things, as you say. My way is to dream of going home, in the body or in the spirit."

"Aye; but we shall be afraid to let you go out shooting alone, lest you should see the towers of Warsaw at the bottom of the Baïkal, or be persuaded that a pull of your trigger will take you to them."

"No fear, Paul. I am most religious when alone; and I shall best recover my faith where man is not present to drown the whispers of Providence, or mar the signs He holds out in

the skies and on the mountain tops. Even these heavens are measured out with the golden compasses; and the same sun which shines on the graves of our heroes fires the pines on yonder mountain steep, and unlocks its torrents in spring."

"How much further will your faith carry you? To forgive Nicholas?"

Ernest drew a long breath between his teeth, but calmly replied—

"Perhaps even so far. Philosophy alone might lead me to this, if it could so enable me to enter into the constitution of a tyrant's mind as to conceive the forces under which it acts."

"But, once allowing that it is acted upon by forces, known or unknown, you cannot withhold forgiveness? Your faith refers all forces to one master impulse, does it not?"

"It does; and therefore my faith, when perfected, will impel me to forgive,—even Nicholas. But no more of him now. Shall I bring you some water-fowl? Can your fair Mongolian tell you how much longer they will stay with us? Their flight must be very near."

And without waiting for an answer, the badged Siberian serf strode into the pine-woods with a step very like that of a free man.

Chapter III.

A WOUNDED SPIRIT.

If Owžih and his family had been offered a choice whether to be attached to the soil as serfs, or to work in the silver mine by the mouth of which they were located, they would have found it difficult to make their decision. Amidst the manifold woes of both positions, each had some advantages over the other. The regular amount of labour required of the miners,—labour in which there was room for the exercise of intelligence,—was a relief rather than a burden to overwrought minds and sinking hearts; while they might not have had resolution to appoint for themselves, and execute, a daily task on plots of land for whose improvement they were responsible only at the end of the season. On the other hand, they were exposed to the control of Russian task-masters; and it was all a chance whether they would be tyrannical, or whether they would appreciate and reward skill and industry. Again, the dwellings of the miners were somewhat less wretched than those of the cultivators, and were situated, high and dry, among picturesque rocks, instead of standing alone in the midst of a marsh, or on the borders of dreary fir-woods. On the other hand, again, the cultivators could supply themselves with necessaries from their own resources, while the miners suffered much for some time from the want of all but the commonest

necessaries, and seemed likely to be always exposed to the inconveniences attending the rudest state of barter. Those who had been long settled had agreed upon plans of mutual accommodation as to providing furniture, clothing, and food; but it was difficult for new comers to obtain a share of the compact; both because an increased demand is rather a trouble than an advantage, in a very rude system of barter, and because it must be some time before they could have any thing to change away which their neighbours would be willing to take. Of all the silver which passed through their hands, not one grain was to become their property; nor, if it had, would it have been of any use to them: for no coin was circulated in this wild region, and metal in its native state is neither fit for ornament nor for a medium of exchange. The neighbouring peasantry cared nothing for silver, further than as something which was valued by great people at a distance, and gave consequence to the region they inhabited, and brought new settlers into it. They knew nothing of the use of money; and merely exchanged with one another so much rye every year for so much cloth, coarsely woven from wool that came from the south in exchange for skins. In like manner, rough-hewn deal benches went for game or bear's flesh; and no one article was fixed upon which might maintain a tolerably steady value, and change away for all other things. Such a plan would have simplified their commerce considerably, and have admitted strangers to share it; but they did not wish to have their

commerce simplified, and strangers must shift for themselves as they best might.

The little company of Poles were some time in learning to do this cleverly; and they endured more hardship than they need have done. If they had been voluntary settlers, seeking their fortunes, they would have found the elements of prosperity even here; but they were perpetually suffering under a sense of injury; and there was a spirit of listlessness, if not unwillingness, in them about improving their state, which protracted their inconveniences in a way that one or two of the more buoyant-minded of the party did not scruple to call very foolish. Paul, in the one settlement, and Andreas, in the other, were the first who rallied, and began to stimulate their companions to ingenuity and forethought; and they had efficient helpers,—the one in his native wife, and the other in his little daughter Clara. Ernest cared for nothing but solitude; and of Owzin's family, the only one who seemed fit for a state of adversity—of this kind of adversity, at least, —was Lenore. Each morning before it was necessary to be stirring,—hours before the day began to break,—Owzin rose from his bed of disturbed sleep; disturbed, not by the hardness of the planks, or the ill-odour of the hide on which he slept, or by the suffocating smoke with which it was necessary to fill the hut to keep out the cold; not by these, for Owzin had been a soldier, and had learned to sleep in any temperature, and on the bare battle-field; but by cruel thoughts, which came back all the more vividly at night, for being

driven off amidst the toils of the day. Lighting his torch of pine-wood, he went forth before the night-fogs were dispersed, or while the stars glittered like steel through the biting air, and was always the first to arrive at the shaft, and to bury himself in the dark chambers of the mine. Taddeus soon followed to the smelting-house, which was the province of his labours. There, amidst heat and toil, the father and son could lose in part the sense of their misfortunes for hours together; for nothing is so beguiling as labour: at least, when that of the head must aid that of the hands, which is the case in most mining operations.

The women were far more unhappily circumstanced. Though they wanted almost every thing, there was little for them to do, from the absence of materials. They looked around them upon a scene of discomfort which they could not remedy, and felt themselves as helpless as ladies of their rank often are in much happier circumstances. When Taddeus had been attended to the smelting-house by his anxious mother, who always went with him to carry his food and ease his painful steps, and when Sophia had meanwhile ventilated the hut and removed the sleeping-skins, little employment remained, but to collect more wood to burn, more moss to stop up crevices, and to see how nearly their stock of food was consumed. Their clothes began to drop to pieces; but they had neither spinning-wheel, distaff, nor wool. The draught under the door seemed to cut off their feet at the ancles, and

the floor was damp, although the oven was always kept heated; but carpets were a luxury unheard of, and not a yard of matting was to be seen nearer than Irkutsk. There was one little person, however, who did not see why these things need be; and that was Clara. She had the advantage of childhood in being able to accommodate herself to a new set of circumstances, and she had learned from her father how to make the most of whatever came to hand,—though their object was different enough; her's being the pleasure of enterprise, and his pure avarice.

The case of Andreas was, in his own opinion, a desperately hard one; and he secretly advanced as nearly as he dared towards cursing Providence for it. He cared no more than the babe of six months, who ruled over Poland, and what character its government bore; and during many months, while the struggle was pending, he preserved, and with ease, a strict neutrality. At last, however, an army contract, which he had peculiar means of supplying with profit to himself, was offered by the patriots. This appeal to his ruling passion overcame him. He was one of the first of the inhabitants of Warsaw that the Russians laid hold of; and he who had never had a patriotic thought in his life, who would have prayed for the Emperor or the Diet as mammon pointed to the one or the other, was punished in the same degree with those who were really guilty of loving their country. It was very hard thus to lose all the gains and scrapings of nearly twenty years, and to be deprived of

the prospect of making any more. It was very hard that his property, of all men's, should be confiscated, when, of all men, he cared most for the property and least for the cause. From his feeling his misfortune so acutely, and being absorbed in it during the journey, his daughter felt it little. For many weeks, he never once reproached her with wasting anything, or being idle, and she was therefore happier than usual during the long journey; for she minded cold and fatigue little in comparison with her father's watchfulness. Nor did her spirits sink when arrived at her future home, for it was less dull than the one at Warsaw. There she was closely mewed up, to be kept out of mischief; and from the day that she had lost her dear mamma, she had never known what companionship was. Here, she had liberty at first to do what she pleased; and when some degree of restraint followed, from her father resuming certain of his old feelings and ways, it was compensated for by an increase of consequence. She began by wandering abroad to watch the field mice to their holes, and pulling rushes to weave baskets in play. Her father, seeing the capabilities of both these amusements, employed her in stripping the nests of these mice of their winter store of onions and other roots, in collecting rushes enough to cover the floor when dried, and even in attempts to weave them into a sort of matting. When Clara thus found her sports turned into work, she consoled herself with being proud of it, and thought she had good reason to be so

when she saw even the wise and grave Lenore adopting her little plans, and trying to make matting too. Sophia also began to follow her when she went into the woods to pull moss at the foot of the trees, or climbed rocks to see how the wild birds built, that she might know where to look for eggs in spring. Sophia was sometimes moody and sometimes kind, but the little girl had always been used to moodiness in her father, and to kindness no one was more sensible; so that, on the whole, she would rather have Sophia's companionship than not.

As for Sophia, anything like enjoyment was out of the question for one whose mind was so embittered as hers. Unable to be soothed by her mother's tenderness, yet obliged to regard her with high respect, she felt relieved to be out of her presence; and yet the solitude of these wildernesses was oppressive to her restless spirit; so that the society of a child was welcome as a refuge from something more irksome still, and the child's pursuits beguiled her of more minutes and hours than anything else could have done. She too began to look for a mouse's nest, now and then, and to learn to distinguish the traces of game and wild animals. Her mother perceived this with pleasure, and hoped that she discerned in it a means of interesting her unhappy son and daughter in one object, and of bringing them into something like their former state of intercourse. If she could but once secure their remaining together, without witnesses, for a few hours, so as to be tempted to free com-

munication, she thought it impossible but that they must understand one another, and mutually forgive.

It was a thing agreed upon that Owzin, Taddeus, and Andreas should go out in turn in pursuit of game, for the common good, before or after the hours of work at the mine. On holidays, which were not very rare occasions, they were at liberty to unite their forces for a hunt on a larger scale; but, in the common way, it was thought better for one only to go, as the fatigue of their daily labour was quite enough for the strength of those who were new to the occupation. Owzin preferred making excursions quite alone; and as he could have no four-footed helper, chose to have none at all. Andreas presently found that the attendance of his little daughter would be very convenient to him, and he therefore speedily trained her to perform the part, not only of gamekeeper, but of spaniel. She not only carried the powder, and bagged the game, but plunged among the reeds to disturb the fowl, and waded in the shallow water to bring out those that had fallen wounded or dead. Few fathers would have thought of exposing a child thus to cold and wet; but Andreas had a great idea of making Clara hardy, as well as of shortening his own work as much as possible, and he therefore wrapt her in skins which could be changed with little trouble when she had been in the water, and obliged her, on emerging, to start a hare, or take some such exercise to warm her. Though it was by no means desirable that Sophia

should undergo discipline of this kind, it was that poor Taddeus, lame and fatigued, should have a companion and helper: and when his mother had accompanied him once or twice, it was naturally Sophia's turn. She looked astonished and indignant at being asked, and replied that she had rather he should take Clara.

"Clara had her share yesterday," said Lenore; "and I must see that our little hand-maiden is not wearied out among us all. Besides, Taddeus wants more help than she has strength to give. He should be relieved of his gun, and wants a shoulder to lean upon in difficult places.

"If my father would but have taught me to load and fire," exclaimed Sophia, "I might have gone alone; for there is such a quantity of game that very little sporting skill is required."

"Ask your brother to give you a lesson to day," replied Lenore, "and then you and Clar may save our harder workers the toil they undergo, partly for our sakes. But I shall hardly like your going alone till, by some means or other, better guns are to be had."

"Papa says that his misses fire three times out of four," observed Clara.

"I do not like the idea of a bear-hunt while this is the case," said Lenore. "It is a fearful thing to miss fire when within reach of the gripe of a bear."

"As Poland has found," said Sophia gloomily. "It is an ugly hug that the monster gives; but some manage to get a knife into its heart while it is at the closest."

"My child," said her mother, mournfully, "why are your thoughts for ever set upon revenge? Why——"

"Revenge!" cried Sophia, clenching her small fingers, and looking upon them with contempt. "No, mother; it is folly for us to think of revenge. If I had been a soldier,—if I had made the false promise to serve the Emperor for twenty-five years,—if I had taken the false oath of allegiance forced upon these loyal new soldiers, I might have thought of revenge: I might have stolen through forests, crept across the steppes, waded, dived,—made my way like Satan into Eden, to dog the Emperor's heels, and get within reach of his heart's-blood. But a woman in eastern Siberia cannot do all this, and must not think of revenge. But hatred is left, mother;—women and slaves can hate!"

"I cannot," replied Lenore.

"I am sorry for you, mother. There is a pleasure in it; and, God knows, we have few pleasures left."

"What pleasure, Sophia?"

"The pleasure of changing everything about one to one's own mood; of staining these snows, and blasting these pine woods, and dimming the sun and stars."

"The pleasure of a child that beats the floor, of an idiot that grinds his teeth: the pleasure of spite. My poor child! is this your best pleasure?"

"Mother, all is changed in the same way, and at once, so that there is no struggle, like the

child's or the idiot's. I never was so calm in my life as I have been since we left Warsaw."

"Because you hate all. You say there is no struggle."

"I hate all that has to do with the Emperor. This waste of snow, and these woods are his."

"And the sun and stars?"

"The sun and stars of Siberia, mother; and every thing that moves on his territory."

"Yes, my dear: I see it all. You hate Andreas."

"Who would not? The mean-souled, cringing wretch!"

"And Taddeus?—you hate Taddeus, Sophia."

Sophia was some time before she answered; but, as Lenore continued to look steadily in her face, she at length said, in a low voice,

"Mother, I loathe him. When he is away, I can turn my thoughts from it: but when I am with him,—that limp of his,—his voice,—they make my heart sick."

"Grief made your heart sick, my child; and you cannot separate that grief from the sight of your brother's lameness, or from the voice which told you the tidings. These things are not Taddeus: though, alas! he suffers from your hatred as if they were. But, Sophia, how is this wounded spirit of yours to be healed?"

"O! let nobody think of healing it, mother. I am happier as it is. I am happier than you. You rise with swollen eyes when I have been sleeping. Your countenance falls when you hear me laugh; and you are altered, mother, very much

altered of late. It would be better for you to be as calm as I am."

"And for your father? Would it be better for all if each grew indifferent? The easiest way then would be to live each in a cave alone, like wild beasts."

"Much the easiest," exclaimed Sophia, drawing a long breath, as if impatient of confinement beneath a roof. "I am so tired of the whole domestic apparatus,—the watching and waiting upon one another, and coaxing and comforting, when we all know there can be no comfort; the——"

"I know no such thing. There is comfort, and I feel it. But I will not speak to you of it now, my dear, because I know you cannot enter into it."

"Not now, nor ever, mother."

"Yes, Sophia; hereafter. You cannot suppose that your present feelings are to last through your existence?"

An internal shudder was here visible which gave the lie to what the sufferer had said of the enviableness of her calm state of feeling. Her mother continued,—

"Just tell me what you are to do with such a spirit as yours in the next world?"

"How do we know that there is another world?" cried Sophia, impatiently. "I know you told me so when I was a child, and that you think so still. But I see nothing to make one believe it; but the contrary. What is worn out, drops to pieces and is done with. What-

ever is weary goes to sleep and is conscious of nothing, and so it will be with us and the world about us. We shall soon be weary enough, and it is folly to pretend that we shall therefore go somewhere to be more lively and active than ever. The world is wearing out very fast: so everybody hopes, unless it be the Emperor. Let it fall to pieces then, and be done with, and the sooner the better."

"It will outlast your unbelief, my child."

"No, mother; mine is not a fickle,—it is a progressive mind. A year ago, if we had been coming here, I should have expected to see some such sights as Clara apprehends, when she looks fearfully round her. I should have watched for flitting spirits among the rocks, and have sung hymns in the woods, and fancied they were heard and answered, because there are echoes about us. I am wiser now, and shall not go back into the old state. I see things as they are, bleak and bare, and soulless. You will not find me among the worshippers of the Charmed Sea. I leave such worship to the peasants."

"And another kind of worship to us to whom all things are not bleak and bare. But, Sophia, how far is your mind to be progressive, and why, if there is so soon to be an end of it?"

Sophia was not prepared with a very clear answer to this. She denied that, by progression, she meant anything proceeding regularly, according to a plan. All that she meant was that she once believed a great many things that she did not know, and now she only believed what her senses taught her.

"And do you believe what actually passes before your eyes?" inquired her mother.

"Why, one would think," said Sophia, half laughing, "that you knew what passed within one. Do you know, mother, all the things that I see are often so like shadows or dreams, that I am obliged to touch and grasp them before I am sure that I am awake."

"I knew it, my dear. Your life is like the adventure of a sleep-walker: but are not you aware how sure sleep-walkers sometimes are that they know better what they are about than those who are awake? I do not ask you to take my word on any matters of faith. I only ask you to believe the word of one who has never deceived you, that there is calmness to be had without hating, and comfort without superstition."

"If you mean to tell me so from your own experience, mother, I must believe you: but if you are going to tell me that Ernest is calm and Paul comfortable, that is a different thing."

"I can tell you of myself, my child. I am not happy, and it would be mocking Providence to pretend to be so; but I am not without comfort. You speak of swollen eyes; but tears flow from other causes than grief. Night is the time for devotion, and there are some who can seldom look up into the starry heavens without the homage of emotion. You say my countenance falls when you laugh; and I dare say it is true, for your laugh now gives me more pain than any sound I hear. But even this is not a hopeless pain. I believe that everything proceeds accord-

ing to a plan,—the progression of your mind, as well as of yonder morning star towards its setting,—the working out of your suffering, and of Cyprian's punishment——"

At the mention of the name, Sophia flinched as if pierced through the marrow. The next moment, she gazed fiercely at her mother, who met her eye with a mild look of compassion.

"I have done wrong, my child, in avoiding all mention of this name so long. Nay; hear me. We each know that he is perpetually in our thoughts: that every foot-fall is taken for his, every deep tone felt to thrill us like his; every ——"

"Stop, mother, stop. Nobody can—nobody dares—he is *mine;* and if any one——"

"No one shall speak his name lightly, my love; but you cannot prevent our remembering him. You would not wish it."

"Yes, I would have him forgotten,—utterly."

"No, Sophia, that cannot be. It was on my shoulder that you first wept your confession that you loved him; it was to me that you both came, when your love was not too engrossing for sympathy; and by me, therefore, shall your love never be forgotten. If it were forgotten, how could I trust for forgiveness for you? You will ask me why I should either hope or pray for you. It is because I have faith; and I have faith because I have not, like you, been tried beyond my strength. I have your father left me, and my deprivations are therefore nothing to yours; nothing to make my heart sick, if yours were less so."

Sophia grieved her mother by coldly entreat-

ing that she might not add to her sorrows in any way. She was so far from being tried beyond her strength, that at present she did not feel herself tried at all. Nobody could have less occasion for effort, for strength. That was all over long ago. She must beg that she might occasion no uneasiness. Nothing could be further from her wish.

"I take you at your word," said Lenore, with a calmness which was the result of strong effort, for she saw that the moment for indulging tenderness was not yet come. "I take you at your word. If you wish to save me uneasiness, go with Taddeus to-day."

"O, certainly. It will be a very creditable day to begin, too: a fine day for sport, if we can but get out before the fogs come on. Those fogs are so choking, and this smoke too! Between the two, one can scarcely breathe anywhere. What is there wanting to be done before I go? Is there nothing that I can do to save you trouble?"

Lenore shook her head, and said no more.

"One thing besides," said Sophia, returning from the door; "I go with Taddeus because you wish it: but if he dares to whisper so much as——"

"He will not."

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure. I advised him not, and I have his promise."

"Why was I not assured of this before? It might have saved you much pain."

"Who could venture, my dear?"

"You have ventured, you see, and where is the harm?" asked Sophia, with a stiff smile. As she turned away again, she thought within herself,——

"If I could feel in any way as I used to do, I should be full of remorse for treating my mother so coldly. But it cannot hurt her, as I am also different towards every body else. No; it cannot hurt her: and so——it does not signify. Nothing signifies."

Yet at this very moment Sophia felt her flesh creep at the sound of Taddeus's limping tread approaching.

"I am going with you, Taddeus," said she, lightly, "and you are to teach me to load and fire;" and she talked on till out of her mother's hearing, when she became suddenly silent.

She was not the less obsequious to her brother, watching every motion, and offering attentions which were painful to him from being overstrained. Presently they saw their little friend Clara in an odd situation, which afforded some relief to their formality. She was doing battle with a large bird, the Russian turkey, which had been caught in a snare laid by Andreas. Clara had been walking round and round at a safe distance, pondering how best to attack the creature, whose flapping wings and threatening countenance might well seem alarming to a little girl.

"Stand aside, my dear, and I will dispatch him," said Taddeus, and the turkey forthwith ceased its clamour.

"I will carry him home; he is too heavy for you," said Sophia, "and you will go with Taddeus. You know so much better——"

"I can't go to-day," replied the child. "I went yesterday, and there is a great deal indeed to do at home." And the little house-keeper gave a very sage account of the domestic duties that lay before her.

Sophia would not listen to some, and promised to discharge others; but, seeing that the child looked distressed, Taddeus declared that she should go where she liked, slung the big bird over her shoulders, and sent her tripping homewards.

In the midst of the next wood they saw somebody moving among the firs at a distance. Sophia changed colour, as she always did on distinguishing a human figure in unfrequented places. Another soon appeared, whose aspect left no doubt as to who the first was. They were Paul and his wife.

"Well met!" cried Sophia, disengaging herself from her brother, and running on to meet them. "You three will take care of one another admirably; and, Paul, your wife will carry Taddeus's gun when he is tired, and you will see him safe on the way home; and the game may lie any where that he chooses to put it till the evening, and I will go for it. And O, Paul, we want some more money sadly, and you must give us some, for our guns are not to be trusted to shoot it. You see we cannot get more money without better guns, nor yet better guns without more money."

And Sophia took flight without any resistance from her brother, who could not indeed very reasonably require her to be the companion of Paul's wife in a sporting expedition.

Chapter IV.

A LODGE IN THE WILDERNESS.

It does not follow that Sophia had lost her senses because she talked of shooting money,—of replenishing the funds of the little company by means of rifle and powder. It only follows that their money was not made of gold and silver.

"I think, Paul," said Taddeus, "you change your arms as often as a court-lady varies her dress. The last time we met, you were carrying a lance twice as long as yourself, and to-day you have a bundle of arrows."

"According to our game should be our arms. When we begin to hunger for bear's flesh, I carry a lance, and bring old Alexander with me to teach the creature to squat on its hind legs, convenient for a thrust. I tell him he will be qualified to lead one about the streets of Warsaw by the time we get back. To-day, I come out for skins,—sables if I can get them; and am my wife's pupil for the occasion. She made these arrows,—blunt, you see, so as not to injure the skins, and she is to bring down the first we see. She carries my rifle, however, that we may not lose the chance of other game by the way."

"Are your sable-skins for sale or exchange?"

"O, for sale, to be sure. Our money system must extend very much before we shall want so valuable a medium. The inhabitants of a poor hamlet can get on a long time with copper and silver before they begin to want gold: and mouse, ounce, and hare skins may serve us at present as well as sables could do. But how do your neighbours take to your plan of exchange by a medium? Do they see that it is more convenient than barter?"

"Many do; and this is the reason why we are in want of more skins, as Sophia told you. The man who was vexed with us for not taking a whole sheep, when we really did not want to have more than a quarter of one, and had nothing so valuable as a whole one to give in return, was more angry than ever when we first offered him a hare-skin for a quarter of his mutton, and told him that you would give him a wicker seat and basket for the same hare-skin. And his wife thought us fools for offering to take three or four ounce-skins in exchange for two of Clara's mats. But now they begin to find it convenient for those who have little merchandise to barter away, to make some one article a sort of rough measure of the value of the rest."

"The women like the plan, I will answer for it," said Paul. "Instead of having to carry the carcase of a whole sheep about with them, with a bench and a bundle of clothing, perhaps, in addition, with the chance of having to convey them all home again, because nobody may happen to want just these things at this very time, and in these very quantities, they have now only to

tie up their package of skins, and go out bargaining, trusting that those who want mutton will come in like manner to them. O, yes; the burden-bearers must find their account in there being, at last, a medium of exchange."

"But how is it that they had had none before?" said Taddeus. "One would have thought that the burden-bearers, at least, would have been driven to such a device long ago."

"Burden-bearers have more bright ideas than their lords allow them to make use of," observed Paul. "I will ask my good lady whether she ever thought of such a thing, while she roved about in the south at her mother's heels."

And Paul beckoned to his wife, Emilia, (for so he had called her,) and by means of gesticulations and gibberish, of which Taddeus could make nothing, learned from her that the men of the southern tribes valued their possessions at so many horses, or so many sheep, and that they had no other measure.

"As clumsy folks as the patriarchs themselves," pronounced Paul, "though the world is so many ages older. Only conceive what a method for rovers to carry their purses! Instead of a pocket-book, or a money-bag, or even a package of skins, to have to transport herds of horses, and droves of sheep spreading half a mile square. Why, a rich man must keep a dozen salaried purse-bearers, instead of having his wealth in his pocket, or under lock and key."

"Do not forget the advantage," replied Taddeus,—"no small one in the deserts of Asia,—of being able to eat one's money when one is

hungry, which is not the case with gold and silver, nor even with our skins."

"True; but still they might easily have other denominations of money for common use on small occasions."

"Even as we may, if necessary. At present, our money serves either for use or exchange. We can either make mittens of our mouse-skins, and leggings of our hare-skins, or give them in return for fish and rye-bread; and hereafter——"

"Hereafter," interrupted Paul, "the Siberians may grow civilized enough to have money that is fit for nothing but to be money, like the paper-medium of our merchants; but it will hardly be in our time. There is gold and silver money still in every country in Europe, and gold and silver are used for ornaments and dinner-services as well as for coinage. But my good woman has something more to tell us. Do look at her now, and say whether you ever saw a European wife wait so prettily for leave to speak."

Taddeus had no pleasure in witnessing the slavish delight testified by Emilia when her lord seemed disposed to attend to her. He turned away from seeing her loaded with caresses with nearly as much disgust as if they had been stripes; and his thoughts glanced proudly and painfully towards the daughters and sisters of the heroes of Poland. He was in a reverie when Paul called him to look at a little ornament of virgin silver which Emilia carried at the end of each of the thick braids of hair which hung down on either side her head.

"She says," continued Paul, "that the women

carried on exchanges among themselves which their lords had nothing to do with. These bits of silver, with a very few of gold, are liked the best; then come bright pebbles, and lastly, flakes of something which I take to be the semi-transparent mica that we were talking of making windows of."

"Their lords might, for once, have condescended to receive a lesson from them," observed Taddeus. "The ladies used the more convenient media, in my opinion."

"I think we might take the hint," said Paul. "I question whether we shall not soon find ourselves in difficulties, not only as to the quantity but the quality of our money. Our skins get sadly worn by passing from hand to hand; and our neighbours will refuse to take them when the hair is all off, and they look like nothing better than bits of old leather."

"Besides," observed Taddeus, "there are no means of keeping those of the same denomination of equal value. One mouse's skin may be as good as another, at first; but it depends on how much each circulates, and on what care is taken of both, whether they are equally fit to be made mittens of at the close of the season. There will be endless trouble whenever our neighbours begin to look sharp, choose which mouse's skins they will take in exchange, and which not."

"There is another danger," responded Paul, "though a distant one. The seasons here do not affect all animals alike, and a winter that may

freeze our poor little mice in their holes, may do no harm to the ounces or hares. Now, if it should happen that we could for a whole year get no mice, and double the number of hares, our whole commerce will become perplexed. No one will know whether he is rich or not, if the value of his money is totally changed; and little Clara may find that she can buy more with a single mouse's skin than her father with the twenty hare-skins he will have been hoarding for years!"

"It is very difficult to devise a kind of money that is steady in its value," replied Taddeus. "Metals will always prove the best, I should think."

"Yes; because they may be divided into very small portions; and they are little subject to wear and tear; and they carry great value in small bulk, so as to be convenient in removal."

"So far so good. All this is true of such chance bits as are dangling at your wife's shoulders; bits found near our smelting-house, or in the beds of rivers. But to make them as useful as they may be made, they must be coined. Without this, they cannot be marked out into denominations, nor, if they could, would their value remain steady. We could only determine the denomination of jagged, misshapen pieces of silver like those by perpetual weighing; and there would be many gradations between the weights required. And the circumstance of a thief running away with a handful, or of some lucky person picking up a dozen pieces in a day, would change the value, both of each

denomination, and of all together, in a way which can scarcely take place where the process of coining has to be gone through, before the metals can be used as money."

Paul thought that beauty was a quality which should be taken into consideration in the choice of all things that man meant to possess himself of, from a wife to a pair of mittens. Now, he thought gold and silver by far the prettiest commodities that can pass for any length of time from hand to hand.

"Clara would give it against you there," replied Taddeus. "She is a great admirer of bright feathers, and would think such bunches of them as the Indians use as pretty a kind of money as need be devised. She had a fine assortment of them in her little cabinet at home. She was wondering, the other day, poor child, whose hands they were in now, and saying how gaily they would dress up the screen that she is weaving, to stand between the door and the oven. She thinks our mouse-skins very soft and pretty, too, and would like of all things to have a snow-white hare for a favourite, that she might cherish its beautiful coat."

"Look, look!" cried Paul, "there is a Persian duck among the reeds. If I can get it for Clara, she need not wish for a prettier bunch of feathers than it will make. Shall I use powder, or try my arrows? I give you warning that we shall have a terrible din if I fire, whether I hit my mark or not."

"Try the arrow first, for the feathers' sake. You can but fire at last."

The arrow whizzed from Paul's inexperienced hand over the back of the beautiful bird, just touching the tuft on its head. It set up a scream, which caused a plashing in all the marshes for a mile round, and roused innumerable woodcocks from their nests among the reeds. Emilia, out of patience that such a hubbub had ensued upon the failure of an arrow made by her, snatched the bow, and shot without more ado, while the wings of the bird were yet spread. The duck sprang convulsively out of the water, plumped in again, and sank; but the lady was already up to the middle in the water. She, too, dived, and presently reappeared with the prey between her teeth, seized upon two more unfortunate birds which happened to be within reach, strangled them, shook the water from their oily plumage, and laid them down at her husband's feet. Then she returned for the arrow which had been first shot, found, and presented it, and retired behind the sportsmen, wringing her hair and garment, and being ready for further orders. Paul could not restrain his admiration at all this. Unlike the Indian who awaits such performances from his squaw in profound gravity, and takes no notice when they are done, he clapped, shouted, looked as if he was going to jump in after her, and rewarded her, wet as she was, with a kiss and a hearty shake of the hand, when the adventure was over.

Taddeus seemed to admire the duck more than the lady.

"What a splendid creature!" said he, "What size! What proportions!"

"Aye, has she not? And such an eye, too!"

"Brilliant, indeed."

"So you can get over the slant up from the nose. I think nothing of it; but, Alexander—"

"Beak, I should rather say. How jet black that beak is! And the crest that rose and fell in its terror. And the plumage! Clara had not a finer rose colour in all her cabinet."

"O, you are talking of the duck! I thought you meant Emilia; and I am sure there is the most to admire in her of the two. But you have not seen half her accomplishments yet. There was no room for her to swim in that pond. She swims beautifully. You shall see her in some broad reach of the Selinga some day, when she goes to watch the beavers. She might help them to build. On my honour, she can stay in the water for hours together, and keep under to frighten me, till I expect never to see her again. O, you have no idea yet what she can do."

"She can see in the dark like an owl, you say, and track game like a pointer, and fetch it like a spaniel, and hearken like a deer, and run like an ostrich. Now, tell me what she can do like a woman."

"Cook my dinner, and keep my house warm, and wait upon me."

"So this is to be a woman, is it?"

"Yes; and a few other things. To scrape lint and nurse the wounded was proper woman's employment down in Poland yonder. As for the other things you value so much,—the power of thinking, and reasoning, and all that,—where is

the Polish woman that would not now be better without it?"

"In the same way, I suppose, as their husbands and brothers would be better without either thoughts or feelings. Polish men would be happier now as savages than as enslaved heroes, and, in like manner, women would be better as mere animals than as rational beings; therefore, patriotism is to be eschewed by the one sex, and rationality by the other. This is your reasoning, is it not?"

"Let us have no reasoning, pray. All I mean is, that I am sorry to see your mother look so wasted, and your sister so haggard; and that I wish they could be as happy as my little woman. There! she has started a sable."

And Paul, who had talked more gravity this day than any day since the loss of the last battle in which he fought, bounded off to his sport. He was not recoverable, for five minutes together, till near nightfall, going hither and thither, faster than Taddeus could follow him, and having not a word to spare while taking aim, or beating about for a new prey. He was very careful of his friend, however, making signs to Emilia that she was to attend upon and aid him to the utmost. At first, Taddeus would rather have been left to himself, and found it difficult to receive the lady's kind offices thankfully; but they really were offices of kindness, and so modestly and gently urged, that his repugnance gave way, and he soon submitted to have his infirmity relieved by one who was certainly a far better help in guiding,

walking, and preparing for sport, than either his mother or sister could have been.

To his own surprise, he was not the first to think of returning home, though he had presently obtained all the game he wanted. While he was still moving onwards, and Paul was roving, nobody knew where, Emilia began to look about her, and up into the sky, with a countenance of some anxiety, and a gesture implying that she either felt very cold, or expected soon to feel so. It had not been one of the most trying days Taddeus had known. The sun, very low in the sky, had shone with a dim, hazy light, in which, however, there was some warmth. There had been little wind, and that little had not told of frost. The heavens were grey, and there was a very dark line to windward; but this was so usual, as was the moaning among the firs which now began to make itself heard, that Taddeus would have taken no particular notice of it if Emilia had not appeared to do so. Communication by language not having yet been established between him and his supporter, he could not make out the extent of her fears, till she at length slipped from under the arm which leaned on her shoulder, climbed a neighbouring pine like the nimblest of the squirrels that harboured near, and uttered a peculiar call, which could be heard to a vast distance, from its unlikeness to any of the deep and grave sounds of a northern wilderness. She came down, and pointed the way back; refusing, by signs, to wait for Paul, and seeming confident that he would immediately

follow. He did not appear, however, and again she climbed, and again she called, more loudly and hastily, as volumes of black clouds unrolled themselves before the wind, and seemed to sink as well as spread. Taddeus saw that she apprehended snow, but was not fully aware how very soon the atmosphere, in its now approaching state, becomes incapable of transmitting sound to any distance; and that if Paul was to be warned homewards by the cry, it must be immediately. It was not long before he came, considerably out of humour at finding that both his companions were safe and well. He had concluded that some accident had caused such repeated alarms, and was vexed to have been called off from a very tempting chase.

"Call, call, call!" he exclaimed; "they came as thick as an English traveller's calls at an hotel; and all for nothing. I wonder the jade dared to take such a liberty with me. She made my heart turn over; I can tell you that. I thought of nothing less than that a bear had hugged one of you. Before I was frightened, I would not hear her, for you never saw such a beautiful animal as I was at the heels of. A black fox, if you will believe me; but you won't; nor any body else, for black foxes are oftener seen than caught; and so one is winked at for a tale-telling traveller, if one says what I am saying now. But it was a black fox, as sure as that is a white hare over your shoulder; and I should have had him in another minute, if that jade had not sent a call that went through me

when my shot should have gone through him. His coat would have been a fortune to me. My hut would have been a palace presently, in comparison with Ernest's, to say nothing of the glory of being the first of you to shoot a black fox. And to have been called off just because there is snow in the air! As if snow was as rare here as it is at Timbuctoo!"

And thus the disappointed sportsman went on growling,—not so that his wife could understand him. She only comprehended that, for some unknown cause, her potent lord was displeased with her. This was enough to make her look very penitent. She scarcely glanced at the threatening sky, when Taddeus pointed it out as her excuse, and stood, looking the quintessence of a slave, till motioned to to lead the way.

She led them nearly as straight as the arrow flies;—a mode of proceeding more practicable in that country than in many less wild. The forests were not tangled, like those of a southern region, but composed of multitudes of stems, bare to the height of some feet from the ground. There were few small streams in the plains; and those few were rendered passable by stepping-stones, the precise situation of which Emilia seemed to know by instinct. Though it was now nearly dark, she did not, in one instance, fail to arrive in a straight line with the passage over the stream: nor did she once pause, as if perplexed, when her companions saw nothing but a wilderness of wood around them. There was no hope of star-light guidance this evening.

The clouds hung so low that they seemed to rest on the tops of the stunted firs; and they slowly rolled and tumbled, as if they were about to enwreath and carry up those who were moving beneath them. It was time now, Paul perceived, to cease his grumbling, as something more important was on hand than the chase of a black fox. On issuing from a wood, a blinding, suffocating mass of snow was driven in their faces, and compelled them all to turn their backs if they wished to breathe. Not the more for this would Emilia allow them one moment's pause; and perceiving that the lame Taddeus, who had long had some difficulty in proceeding in the usual manner, was utterly unable to walk backwards, she snatched his handkerchief from his neck, hung it over his face like a veil, seized both his hands, and pulled him on thus blind-folded.

"Surely," said Taddeus, "we had better climb a tree, and wait till the drift is past."

"Aye, and have our feet frozen off, to say nothing of noses and ears," replied Paul. "And supposing we lived till morning, how are we to get home through snow three yards deep, maybe, and not frozen to walking consistence? No, no; our only chance, if we have one, is in getting on as far as the rocks, at any rate. But God knows I can't keep this up long."

Paul had more to say; for the last thing he ever thought of was leaving off talking; but his companion could no longer hear him. The snow, falling noiselessly as the light, yet stifled all sounds, and the last words of Paul's which were

heard; came like murmurs from under a pillow. When these had ceased for some little time, Taddeus addressed him, and got no answer. Growing uneasy, he put out his hand to feel for him. Paul was certainly not within some yards. Uttering now her first exclamation of fear, Emilia sprang back upon her footsteps, motioning to Taddeus not to stir, and in two minutes returned with her husband, who had tripped and fallen, and been half buried in snow before he could recover himself. In order that this might not happen again, his wife slipped her girdle, and tied it round his arm, holding the other end herself, and dragging on their lame friend as before.

"This will never do," said Taddeus, resolutely stopping short. "You two will be lost by lagging with me. I shall go back to the wood, and fare as I best may till the storm is over; and God speed you!"

Paul answered only by pushing him vigorously on, setting his back against Taddeus's, so that the breadth of only one person was opposed to the drift, and one made a path for all. This was an amendment; but Taddeus was still convinced that the two would get on better without him, and again he stiffened himself against being driven forward.

"I am going back," said he, very distinctly. "If the plain is passable in the morning, you will come and look for me. If not, never mind. You know *I* cannot be sorry to get quit so easily of such a life as mine."

Paul growled impatiently; but, for once, Tad-

deus was too nimble for them. He had played them the slip, and they groped after him for some minutes in vain.

"It does not much matter," muttered Paul to himself. "It is only being found a few feet further from one another eight months hence, when the snow melts. Emilia and I will stay together, however; we will keep one another warm as long as we can. 'Tis not so very cold now, though, to my feeling, as it was; and yet I can scarcely tell whether Emilia grasps me or not. 'Tis the sleepiness that is so odd. One might choose a better time for going to sleep, though there is a big, soft, feather-bed about us. But I don't believe I can keep awake two minutes longer. Holla! there! What's that? Why! is this Poland again? Aye, home: yes, yes. Why, mother, you have seen me faint before, and you did not scream so then. But it is so dark. Bring lights. Have you no lights? Eh, what? I can't hear you. My ears;—how they ring? Lights, I say! Eh? Good-night, mother. I'm sleepy. I....I can't....good-night."

And Paul ceased his muttering, having sunk down in the snow some moments before. Emilia did not cease to scream in his ear, to attempt to raise him, to chafe his limbs, and warm his head in her bosom. He made feeble resistance, as if angry at being disturbed; and in keeping this up lay the only chance! Before he became quite passive, a new hope crossed her. For one moment the drift slackened, ceased; and in that moment came tidings that help was not far off.

There was yet neither gleam nor sound; but Emilia detected that there was wood-smoke in the air. She at once gave over her chafing, and shouting into the ears of the dying man, lifted him on her back, and struggled forward in the direction of the fire. It was not so difficult for her to do this as it would have been to Sophia, for she had been accustomed from childhood to bear heavy burdens of skins, and to bring faggots from the woods. Before she was quite exhausted, she not only was encouraged by a scent of turpentine which reached her, but could distinguish a red gleam through the veil of falling snow.

Her appearance was somewhat startling to those who had kindled the fire. They were Siberian merchants,—that is, itinerants, who knew as well as any people in the world how to keep body and soul together in all weathers. The present company consisted of three who were just finishing their yearly circuit, and, having been detained on the road by the great increase in the number of their customers, in consequence of the Emperor's accession of convict subjects, had found the autumn close upon them while they were yet some way from their several homes. They were now encamped for the night, and seemed to have no other anxiety amidst this terrific wilderness than that the frost should immediately follow the snow, in order that the plains might be passable. They had banked up the snow in a circle round them, and lighted a huge fire within. A bear skin, stuck upon poles, made a sort of tent covering, and one at a time

was employed to prevent its becoming too heavily laden by the drift. The others lazily fed the fire, as they lay on hides within the heat of it, and smoked their pipes and drank brandy as calmly as if they had been under the best roof in Tobolsk. The glittering of the white wall in the background, the sparkling of the snow-flakes as they drizzled thick and slanting over the darting blaze, had less of a domestic character than the retreat in which the merchants alternately dozed and gossiped. The place altogether looked very tempting to Emilia as she emerged from the utter darkness, and stood dripping with her load in the presence of the shoveller. The man swore, the dogs leaped up, the dozers roused themselves; and, though vexed at the interruption, they could not refuse a place by their fire to the wanderers.

More than this, however, they would not do. They were impenetrable about poor Taddeus's fate; and as they would not stir, Emilia was exposed to a sad struggle between duty and inclination. Her husband began to revive almost immediately, and she believed that there was yet time to save his friend, if she could bring herself to leave the further cure of Paul to the merchants.

She did her duty. Pointing out to the smokers the method in which they were to proceed, and in which they were indeed much practised, she seized a handful of brands, some of which might, she hoped, escape being quenched, called the dogs without ceremony, and stalked forth again the way she had come, the brands casting a

scanty red light for a few moments only before she disappeared.

The shoveller nearly forgot his duty in looking out and listening, for he was better aware than his mates below what Emilia had to contend with. He began to give her over, and his companions to swear at the probable chance of losing their dogs, before there was any sign of motion near.

"Keep that man quiet, can't ye?" the watchman cried. "I want to listen."

"He won't be still," they replied. "His pains and twitches are on him. We have warmed him too soon. You should see him floundering like a duck in the water. Listen how he moans."

"Move him farther from the fire, then, and make him hold his tongue. I could not hear the dogs two yards off with such a screeching coming up from between you."

As soon as Paul began to collect his ideas, he kept his pain more to himself, and began to listen as eagerly as any body for sounds from afar.

"I see something; but it cannot be the light she carried,—it is so high up in the air," proclaimed the watchman. "It is coming this way, however. No: it is out. Aye; there it is again. It was a thick wreath that hid it. Now, where is it gone?"

Paul scrambled up on his hands and knees, intending to play the watchman too; but he could not yet stand. His feet were as numb as ever, though his ancles burned with pain. The

light was not out, and it came riding in the air, dimly dancing, and then steadily blazing again. It was preceded by one of the dogs, leaping backwards and forwards between the little camp and the party behind. The other dog did not do the same, being otherwise engaged. He was the torch-bearer.

When Emilia had been led by the dogs to the place where Taddeus lay, and had reared him up insensible from under the drift, she found she could not charge herself with both the body and the light, the one of which was nearly as indispensable as the other. She carried Taddeus as she had carried her husband, and made one of the tractable dogs mount to the top of all with a flaming torch in his mouth; and thus they proceeded, the drift sometimes being nearly as thick as ever, and threatening to plunge them in darkness; and sometimes slackening so as to allow gleams and flickerings to point out her former footsteps.

She could think no more of Taddeus when she saw her husband dizzily falling back as often as he attempted to rise, and groaning with his torments. She was in consternation when she had examined his ancles and feet; and seizing a large knife and an earthen bowl that lay near, she disappeared behind the fire. A fearful howl from each of the dogs gave the next tidings of her. The merchants swore that they would cut the animals' tongues out if this bark brought any more strangers in upon them. They presently saw that their dogs would never howl more. Emilia appeared with a bowl full of reeking

blood in one hand, and the carcasses of the two poor animals in the other: and immediately proceeded, as if she saw and heard nothing of the fury of the merchants, to pour the warm blood down the throats of Paul and Taddeus, and to cover up their feet in the bodies which she had slain and ripped up for the purpose. When the enraged owners seized her two braids, and pulled them as if they would have divided her scalp, she quietly lifted the great knife to either side of her head and severed the hair. When they griped her by the shoulders, as if they would have shaken her to pieces, she ducked and disappeared behind the bearskin. When one of them wrenched the knife from her, and made a thrust in his passion, she leaped through the fire, and took up a position, with a flaming pine-splinter in each hand, which they did not choose to brave. As soon as Paul could make himself heard, he offered the value of many dogs, if they would let his wife alone; and, as the animals could not be brought to life again, the owners saw that their best wisdom would be to make as good a bargain as they could.

Paul not only offered this high compensation under immediate apprehension for his wife's safety, but thankfully confirmed the bargain when she was sitting securely beside him, or helping him to use his stiff limbs, by leading him to and fro in the little space beside the fire. He felt that he should be paying for the restoration of his own feet, and perhaps of Taddeus's life; for he much doubted whether either limbs or life

could have been saved by other means than Emilia had so promptly adopted, and the efficacy of which she, in common with other natives, well knew. The suspicion never crossed him that he might not be able to fulfil his engagement, and that these men were now in possession of the very wealth he had promised them.

The whole party not only lived till morning, but were of better cheer when the day dawned than they had been twelve hours before. The two sportsmen were weak and stiff, and not a little dispirited when they looked out upon the dreary waste around, and pondered how they were to reach home; but the danger and the fearful battling with the elements were over.

The sky was still dark, but the air so serene, that if a solitary snow-flake had found its way from the clouds, it would have sauntered and danced through the air like a light leaf in autumn. There were no such flakes, however, and all the snow that the atmosphere of the globe could be charged with seemed to be collected within view. Snow was heaped on the eastern mountains, and tumbled in huge masses among the stark, black rocks at their base;—snow was spread to a vast depth upon the steppe, as far as a horizon which it made the eyes ache to attain, clearly distinguishable as it was from the leaden sky;—snow was spread, like a cushioned canopy, over the black woods which extended northwards for many miles. Amidst this waste of whiteness, black waters lay here and there in pools, or in wide reaches of rivers; and in other parts there was a rushing of the currents, and a

smashing and tumbling of the young ice, which had begun to form, but was already giving way at the touch of light and of more temperate airs. All this was dreary enough; but the smoke of the smelting-house could be seen far off: home was visible, if they could but reach it.

The merchants travelled back with the party, in order to receive the promised compensation for their dogs; and Paul was not a little amused with the accounts they gave of their mode of traffic.

"You must have a troublesome journey of it sometimes, friend," he observed to the man next him, who had, like all his brethren of the craft, picked up enough of the languages of the various people he dealt with to be able to carry on something like a conversation. "You must have a troublesome journey in such weather as this," said Paul to him; "but you are free from the danger of being robbed, as people of your trade are in some countries. It is very hard, when they have disposed of their wares, and begin to enjoy the lightness of their load, and the goodly look of the gold and silver they carry in their bosoms, to be stopped in the dark and robbed, or to wake in the morning and find their pouch as empty as their packs. You are never so robbed, I suppose?"

The Siberian indulged his scorn at the idea of gold and silver, and thought that those who carried their wealth in such small compass deserved to lose it. How much better, he urged, was a pack of skins, or a drove of black cattle, or a

sledge-load of rye-flour, which no man could hide in his bosom and slip away with! Though Paul thought robbery a bad thing, he did not consider the not being subject to it the very first quality in money. He asked why the merchant mentioned three kinds of money; and whether all his customers did not agree to use the same.

"Oh, no! Some give us all things that they make or grow in return for our tea from China, and the pepper we buy from abroad, and the clothing we bring from Tobolsk. Others give us only skins; others only cattle; others, again, only rye."

"That is, they use these articles respectively as money."

"Yes; and what we take as money in one district we sell as merchandise in another."

"So you use no coin at all."

"Not here. We travel along a vast line;" and he stretched his arms east and west with a most important look. "In the west, we do as they do in the west,—we pass the Emperor's coin. In the east, we do as they do in the east,—we make no objection to whatever gain they put in our way."

"But do they make no objection? It seems to me that there must be perpetual objections. One says, 'Give me wool for rye.' 'I have rye enough,' says the shepherd. 'What do you want most?' asks the cultivator. 'Fish.' So the cultivator goes to the fisherman, and says, 'Give me fish for rye.' The fisherman wants no rye, but skins; so, even if the hunter happily wants

rye, the cultivator has to manage three bargains before he can get his wool. This seems to me a system open to many objections."

"Yes; the people are as long in exchanging their fish and their furs as in catching and curing them. But what is that to us? We reckon upon spending twice as much time where there is barter as where there is sale; but we make our gain accordingly."

"Aye, to the injury of your customers: they lose their time in bargaining, and by not dividing their labours; and they also pay you largely for the loss of your time. Truly, they are losers in every way. Why do not you teach them to use money?—then you would finish your traffic, and get home before these storms could overtake you."

The merchant laughed, and said that some ways were better for some kinds of people, and others for others. The thing that took the most time, after all, was the measuring quantities of different articles against one another, and agreeing upon their value. Every man could tell how much trouble and expense his own article had cost him, and nobody could judge in the same way of his neighbour's: a third party was necessary to decide between them.

"Oh, aye; and you merchants are the third party, and so have the pronouncing upon the value both of the goods you buy and the goods you sell. It may be very profitable to you to keep exchange in this rude state; but it would be a prodigious convenience and saving to the

people to have the value of their produce measured, and made somewhat steady, by a standard which should not vary very much."

The merchant thought things had better go on as they were. Gold and silver coins were much more valuable among the wise people that lived westwards than among the simple folks to the east.

"As gold and silver, certainly," said Paul; "for savages have little notion of their being valuable. Even my wife there wore as much gold as a duchess would have been glad of, the first time I saw her, and would have given it all away for as many steaks of horse-flesh as she carried ounces of precious metal. But, as money, some such article would be useful to savages in the same way as to civilized people. It would save their time and labour, and prevent their being cheated by you, Mr. Merchant."

The merchant still remained an enemy to innovation; like all who profit largely by things as they are. So Paul pursued,

"I assure you I can speak to the want savages have of money. Even in our little company, inhabiting only five huts in all——"

"You are not going to call us savages," sternly interrupted Taddeus, who had just joined his friend.

"O yes, I am. What would you have more savage than our way of passing last night? or our huts? or our implements? or all about us on this side Irkutsk?"

"That has nothing to do with the matter. You are talking of a social arrangement, and its

subjects; and when the subjects are civilized, you cannot show by their example how the arrangement suits a savage state. I suppose you allow that we, as Poles, are civilized."

"Savage; absolutely savage," persisted Paul. "Why now, who can look more savage than Ernest when you catch him talking to the spirits of the Charmed Sea, or whoever else it is that sets him raving there? Where was there ever a savage, if it is not Andreas when any one alludes to his iron chest at Warsaw? Or your own sister, for that matter,—ten times a day she looks as savage as——"

"As your wife," said Taddeus, moved beyond his patience.

"Just so; only my wife is more like a faithful dog, and your sister like a hunted tiger-cat. But, as I was saying, Mr. Merchant, even in our little company, we presently found we could not get on without a medium of exchange." And he explained their device of skins of three several values. The merchant seemed more amused than he could well account for, and asked if all were so honest that nobody stole this kind of money.

"It is never stolen entire," replied Paul. "Such a theft would be detected at once in so small a society as ours."

"Even supposing," interrupted Taddeus, "that there was a Pole among us who would steal."

"Take care how much you answer for, friend," said Paul. "I was going to say, that though no entire skin has been abstracted, some expert fingers have been at work clipping. A curious

mouse-skin came into my hands lately, made of cuttings from the jags and edges of other mouse-skins."

"Indeed! I should not have thought an article of so low a denomination worth the labour."

"Some people,—you know who I mean,—think no labour too much for gain. Besides, this was probably a first experiment; and if it had succeeded, there would have been a rising up early, and sitting up late, to make patch-work hare-skins or sables,—if we should ever attain to high a denomination of money."

"Well; but what did you do to the miser; for I conclude you mean him? He is no Pole, remember; he does not like to be considered so, so and we may as well take him at his word."

"Since I could not threaten him with the ancient punishment of counterfeiters of the current money, namely, pouring it molten down the throat, I came as near to it as I could. I fried a bit of the tail, and made him eat it, on pain of being pilloried at the mouth of the mine. Then I let him burn the rest, and told him he should be watched, and not get off so easily the next time he was caught clipping and manufacturing money. I dare say he cursed our medium for not being metal. You may melt metal, and nobody knows how many clippings a lump is made of; but piece a skin as neatly as you may, and daub over the inside as cleverly as Andreas himself, and the seams still remain visible to the curious eye. The public has the advantage over counterfeiters where leather money is used."

"And how many advantages knaves have over

the public where leather money is used, we may live to see," observed Taddeus. He was right: it was not necessary for them to be many hours older to ascertain this point.

They were yet at a considerable distance from home when they heard shouts ringing among the rocks before them, and saw one or two dark figures moving among the snow in the plain. The young men answered the shouts, and made signals, the most conspicuous they could devise. The merchants at once became exceedingly inquisitive about the exact situation of Paul's abode; and having learned it, were suddenly in far too great a hurry to go any farther. As for the promised payment, the sportsmen were welcome to the dogs, unless indeed they would give their arrows and a rifle, and the game they carried, in consideration of the loss. Paul sighed over his valuable new arrows, Taddeus over his only rifle, and both over the skins which they were conveying home to be made money of, and which they had managed to retain with that view through the whole adventure. They could not refuse, however, considering what the martyred dogs had done for them; so they surrendered their goods, and returned from this memorable sporting expedition much poorer than they set out; and the merchants retired precipitately in the opposite direction.

At an abrupt turn of the rock they came upon Sophia, who was alone, busily engaged in tracking the path they had followed after parting from her the preceding day, and sounding in the

snow. Sometimes she looked intently into the black stream which flowed sullenly by, and then renewed her sounding, so eagerly, that she did not perceive the approach of the young men and Emilia. Their footsteps could not be heard. She started when they came close up to her, and said, with an indescribable expression of countenance,——

"O, you are safe, are you? We have all been out since dawn to look for you. You will find my mother farther on. They would not spare my father from the mine.——So you are safe, after all!"

"You are disappointed," said Taddeus, in a low and bitter tone. "You hoped to see me no more. You were praying to find my body in those waters."

"I do not pray," said Sophia, pettishly.

"Not to demons?" asked her brother.

"What and where are they?" inquired she, laughing. And she turned to go home without objecting to her brother's construction of what she had been doing.

"I wish Emilia had let me alone last night," thought Taddeus. "No; there is my mother. What would become of her with poor Sophia for her only child?"

And as he shuffled forward painfully to meet his mother, he felt that there was yet something to live for, even if Poland should not be redeemed.

Chapter V.

TRAFFIC IN THE WILDS.

There was a very good reason for the merchants turning back when they discovered whither they were being conducted. They had not only made an enormous profit of their traffic in the little settlement during the absence of the young sportsmen, and the employment of the rest of the men in the mine, but had carried off nearly all the skins they could lay their hands on. They had frightened Clara, and cheated Sophia, out of their respective stocks, and fairly robbed Lenore: so that, with the exception of half a dozen skins, too much worn to be saleable, and therefore left behind, the little company was once more moneyless. Some of them looked rather grave upon the discovery of this new inconvenience, and not the less because the weather was now of the dubious kind which sets in at the end of autumn, and renders the pursuit of game impracticable for a few weeks. But nobody looked so dismal as Andreas, who could not hold up his head for some days after this new misfortune. The loss of anything once possessed was to him the most intolerable of evils; and it certainly seemed to be the one from which he was to have no rest. "I would be deaf, dumb, and blind to be rich," was the sentiment which had been heard to escape from him in his agony. He was not deaf, dumb, or blind; but neither was he rich.

"I would live directly under the sun in the Sandy Desert, or burrow in the snow at the North Pole, if I could get gold there," was another of his aspirations. He was fixed among the snows, but not, alas! so as to get gold; and he considered himself a much-tried man, and appeared with a countenance of great dejection when the next time of meeting their neighbours for the purpose of making purchases came round.

This little market presented a curious scene. It was held near the mouth of the mine, and either on holidays, or at leisure hours; so that groups of grim-faced miners stood to look on, or took part in the traffic, if they chanced to have anything wherewith to conduct it. It seemed remarkable that there should be an unbounded store of what is commonly considered wealth beneath their feet, and piles of bars of shining silver in the smelting-house at hand, while the traffickers were exchanging their goods laboriously, and with perpetual disputes, for one another, or for some common commodity which bore a different value according as it was wanted for use or to serve as a circulating medium. Andreas, and some others cast *longing* glances towards the store-houses of the metals procured by their labour; but there was always an ample array of green coats and red collars,—of sabres and fire-arms,—and, above all, a full exhibition of the knout: in the face of which terrors, no one could dream of fingering his Majesty's mineral wealth, coined or uncoined.

The next was a somewhat awkward market-day

for the Polish settlers. Having been disappointed of getting game, they had nothing to sell; and, having been robbed, they had no purchase-money but five or six clipped and worn skins. They were some time in perceiving the advantage this gave them as to the quantity of goods they might obtain in return; but the discovery, when made, helped to raise the spirits even of Andreas himself; as did another circumstance, which acted in some degree as a remedy of their new inconvenience,—the increased rapidity of the circulation of their money.

Sophia could never bring herself to take part in any social business or amusement, and regularly walked off into solitude when there was a congregation of numbers. To-day, she wanted to have Clara with her, and consented, though unwillingly, to wait on a sheltered ledge of rock near, till the little girl should have made a purchase for her father with her little mouse's skin, the only one she had.

The article she wanted was a pair of pattens for her father;—broad sandals of light wood, tied on with leather thongs, to prevent the feet from sinking in the snow before it was frozen into a hard surface. The right time for chasing the elk is when the snow is in this state; for the elk, wearing no pattens, sinks in the snow at every step, while the shod hunter gains upon him in the open plain. Clara thought the possession of a fine elk would comfort her father for his losses sooner than any other consolation she could devise; so into the market she went, to

look for a pair of pattens. There were several to be sold; but, at first, the holders laughed at the little girl for offering so low a price; and only laughed again when she made melancholy signs that she had no more money to offer. When they found, however, that nobody could give more, they began to be afraid of having to carry their wares home again, and grudgingly offered the worst pair in the market. There was a very suspicious crack in one patten, and the thongs of the other were a good deal worn; but Clara thought they would last till one elk was caught, and then her father would be rich enough to buy a better pair. So she untied her precious mouse-skin from about her neck, gave one more look at it, and paid it away. She wondered whether she should ever see it again, and was sure she should know it by the little hole she had burned in one corner to pass a string through.

Seeing that Sophia looked in a reverie, and in no hurry, she thought she would stand a minute or two to see what became of her mouse-skin.

She had not to wait long. The five who held money were by far the most important people in the market, where money was the scarcest commodity of all; and this importance shifted from one to another more quickly as the exchanges became more brisk.

The countryman who sold the pattens had not intended to purchase anything; but others who did, and who wanted money to do it with, came to him with so many offers of goods that at last he was tempted, and gave the mouse-skin for a

quiverful of blunt arrows and a wooden bowl and platter.

"O dear!" thought Clara, "I have certainly made a very bad bargain; for the bowl and platter, without the arrows, are worth as much as these trumpery pattens."

She could not help following to see who would have her mouse-skin next. The woman who held it seemed to have a great wish for a hunting knife; for she passed by a variety of offered goods, and pushed through a group of eager sellers, to where Ernest stood leaning on his lance, and observing what was going forward. She seized the knife with one hand, as it was stuck in his belt, and proffered the money with the other; but Ernest smiled, and made signs that he had no wish to sell his knife.

"What have you to do with it, my dear?" he inquired, struck with Clara's look of anxiety. "You look as if you wished me to part with my knife."

"This was my mouse-skin," she replied, half crying, "and look,—this is all I got for it!"

"Indeed! I could make a better bargain than that for you now. Let us try; and perhaps I may get both a better pair of pattens and my knife back again soon, if we manage cleverly; and if not, your father will lend me his knife till I can get another from Irkutsk."

And the good-natured Ernest made the exchange for Clara's sake; and, moreover, bought the pattens, which he declared he wanted very much.

Clara had too much sense of justice not to insist on his taking something more; and Ernest promised to accept the first mat she should make.

"And now," said he, "we will look out for the best pair of pattens in the market; but you must not be in a hurry to make your bargain this time. What else would you like to have?"

There were so many tempting things in sight that it was somewhat difficult to choose: and she was half-frightened by the eagerness with which she was courted when she was perceived to be one of the favoured five money-holders. She grasped Ernest's hand, and clutched her treasure, and saw nothing of Sophia's signs of impatience, while engaged in negociation. By Ernest's help, and to her own utter astonishment, she presently found herself mistress of a perfect pair of pattens of the finest wicker-work, a large package of tea which had just crossed the frontier, pepper enough to last the winter, and a vigorous young rein-deer. The rich little lady thought a scarcity of money a fine thing; and having thanked Ernest very gratefully, and given her wealth into the charge of her delighted father, she at length joined Sophia on the rock.

"I am glad you had a reason for staying," said Sophia; "but I do not care now for going any farther. These people must soon have done now, I suppose, and leave us in peace."

"O, I am sorry I kept you," said Clara; "but yet,—I should like to see who has my mouse-skin after all. I shall know it anywhere by the hole in the corner."

"You need not move from where you are, child. You may see where money is passing from hand to hand, by the gathering of the people about the holder. Look how they run after the man with the Chinese belt who sold you the tea."

"Will he carry it away, I wonder?"

"No. He is going back to China for more tea, I suppose; and your mouse-skin will be of no use to him there, or on the road; so he will part with it in this neighbourhood, you will see."

And so it proved; and the exchanges became quicker and quicker every moment till it began to grow dark, and it was necessary for the people to be going home. The five skins remained in the possession of three strangers; viz. one cultivator, one Russian soldier placed as a guard over the silver, and a travelling merchant, who held three out of the five skins.

"How busy they have been all day!" observed Clara, as she turned homewards, after seeing the last trafficker pack up and depart. "They seem to have had as much buying and selling to do as if everybody had had a purse full of money."

"And so they have," replied Paul, who was carrying his purchase home in the shape of as heavy a load of grain as a strong man's back would bear; and groaning under it all the more discontentedly for knowing that, if he had but waited till the close of the day, he might have had a sledge into the bargain, on which to convey his burdens, or be conveyed himself, whenever he should have a rein-deer, or dogs from Kamtchatka to draw it. "They have as much

buying and selling to do, my dear, with little money as with much. The difference is, that when there is much, some of it lies still in the purse, or moves into only one or two new hands; while, where there is little, it flies round and round the market as fast as it can go from hand to hand."

It had never before struck Clara that any piece of money made more than one exchange. She thought that her mouse-skin was worth a pair of pattens, but forgot that if the person with whom she exchanged it did the same thing that she had done, it would become worth two pair of pattens; and if a third bargainer followed the example, it would become worth three pair. She now began to exclaim upon the prodigious value of money. Paul laughed at her for having fancied for a moment that there must be a piece of money for everything that is bought and sold.

"If," said he, "it was necessary for us to have a skin for every individual thing we want to buy, there would soon be an end of all the poor animals in Siberia. And if it was necessary for everybody in Russia to have a piece of coin for every article purchased, the Emperor would have to collect all the gold and silver that were ever dug out of the ground, and to be always digging more at a great expense. And, after all, the value of the money of the kingdom would be no greater than if there was only a tenth part of all this existing."

"Why, to be sure, a ruble that was used yesterday does just as well to use again to-day as a

new one; and my mouse-skin bought as many things just now as twenty mouse-skins once used, would have done. But some people lay by their ducats and rubles, as father used to do in Warsaw. If some lie idle in this way, must others go round faster, or will there be more money made?"

"That depends upon whether money is easy or difficult to be had, and on whether people want to make many exchanges. To-day, money was very difficult to be had, and so it passed round very rapidly; which happened to be the only way in which we could manage to have money enough to carry on our dealings with any briskness. 'Be quick, be quick,' we said to one another, 'for if we can make five pieces of money go through twenty bargains each, it will be nearly the same thing, as to the quantity of business done, as if ten pieces went through ten bargains each, or twenty pieces through five.'"

"It is not often that one of our skins belongs to five people in one day," observed Clara.

"True; and we never before had any pieces go through twenty hands."

"I think it is a fine thing to have very little money," said Clara.

"I do not. Many of us would have been very glad, before the market was over, to have caught more mice and killed more hares. I wish I could do it now, before morning, to baulk that merchant who finished off with pocketing three skins out of five."

"What did he do that for?"

"To make things cheaper than ever to-mor-

row; fill his sledge at our expense; and travel elsewhere to sell his goods, where money is cheaper and goods are dearer than here."

"How will he do so?"

"He will hide one of his skins; and then, when there will be only four in use, more goods still will be given for each, and he will be able to buy as much with two skins as he could buy to-night with three. Then he will begin to sell again; and, to raise the price of his goods, he will bring out the skin he laid by, and put it into circulation."

"Then goods will be just the price they are to-night. But if he sells, the skins will come back to him."

"Yes; and then if he chooses to lay by two, goods will be dearer than ever, and he may play the same trick over again with a larger profit, till he gets all our goods into his hands in return for one skin."

"What a shame!" cried Clara. "People will not let him do so, to be sure?"

"If they must have his goods, and cannot get any more money, they must submit; but it will not be for long. We must soon get more skins by some means or another. I do wish I had the fur cap they took from me when they gave me this horrible covering." And he pulled off and threw away the badge cap which the tender mercy of the Emperor had allotted to him. His shaven head, however, could not bear the cold without it, and he was obliged to let Clara pick it up and put it on again.

"I always thought," she said, "that it was a

very fine thing for goods to be cheap,—and it has been a fine thing for father and me to-day; but yet it seems as if they ought to be dearer again to-morrow."

"And they should be, if I could make them so. You see, my dear, there are two sorts of cheapness, one of which is a good thing, and the other not. When it costs less trouble and expense, for instance, to grow corn than it did before, people will exchange more corn for the same quantity of tea or cloth or money than they did before; and this cheapness is a good thing, because it is a sign of plenty. There is more corn, and no less tea or money. But when more corn is given for a less quantity of tea or money, not because there is more corn, but because the Emperor of China will not let us have so much tea, or the Emperor of Russia so much money as formerly, this kind of cheapness is a bad thing, because it is a token of scarcity. This was our case yesterday. We had a scarcity of skins, but no more goods of other kinds than usual."

"And there was a scarcity of skins in two ways," observed the thoughtful little girl. "When we have had more than we wanted to use as money, it answered very well to make leggings and mittens of them; but now we could not get mouse-skin mittens if we wished it ever so much."

"Not without buying money with more goods than a pair of mittens can ever be worth."

"I never heard of buying money before," said Clara, laughing.

"Indeed! In all money bargains, one party buys goods with money, and the other buys money with goods. How should countries that have no gold and silver mines procure their money in any other way? England buys gold and silver from South America with cotton goods; and the Americans get cotton goods by paying gold and silver, sometimes in coin, and sometimes in lumps of metal. These metals are sometimes, as you see, a commodity, and sometimes a medium of exchange, like our skins. If there happens to be plenty to be had, either of the one or the other, their value rises and falls, like the value of all other commodities,—according to the cost and trouble of procuring them, and a few other circumstances. If there happens to be a scarcity, their exchangeable value may be raised to any height, in proportion to the scarcity, and they cease to be commodities."

"And just the same, I suppose, whether they are in good condition or in bad? My mouse-skin bought as many things to-day, worn and jagged as it was, as it would have bought if it had been new, and sleek, and soft."

"Yes; but as a commodity it would now bear little value. If there were a hundred new ones in the market to-morrow, the old ones would scarcely sell for anything as mitten materials."

"To be sure. They would make very shabby, rotten mittens. But it is a good thing that we have not always this rich merchant here, unless indeed we could always get what skins we want. He might play all kinds of tricks with us."

"Like some foolish kings with their people, my dear; but kings are more sure to be punished for such tricks than this merchant. When he has ruined us all, he can travel away, and enjoy his profits elsewhere; but kings who have put bad money into the market under the name of good, or thought they could vary the quantity as they pleased for their own purposes, have found themselves in a terrible scrape at last. When there was too much coined money among the people, some of it was sure to disappear——"

"Where did it go to?"

"If the people could manage to send it abroad to where money prices were not so high, they did so. If not permitted to do this, it was easy to melt it down at home, and make cups and dishes, and chains and watches of it."

"And then, if there was too little, I suppose they made their plate and chains into coins again. But could they do this without the king's leave?"

"The kings are not sorry to give leave, because the people pay governments something for having their metals coined. But whenever governments meddle to injure the coin, or to prevent its circulating naturally, they are sure to suffer; for violent changes of price make many poor, while they make a few richr; and the consequence of this is that the government is not well supported. The people are not only angry, but they become unable to pay their taxes."

"Do people know directly when more money is sent out, or some drawn in?"

"Very soon, indeed; because great changes

of price follow. In this place now, if we see the same quantity of goods brought for the same number of people to buy, and our skins generally changing hands five times in the day, and prices remaining the same, we are sure that the same quantity of money is in use. If prices remain the same, and skins change hands eight times a-day, we know that there must be fewer skins in the market; and if prices fall very much at the same time, we may be sure that there is very little money indeed, and that everybody will be on the look-out to make more. If prices rise in an equal degree, it will be quite as plain that there are more skins than we want as money; and, presently, some of them will be made into mittens."

"But in such a place as this, it is very easy to count the skins, and observe who steals or hides, and who brings in a fresh supply."

"True; but in the largest empire it may be just as certainly known as here when there is more or less money afloat, by the signs I have mentioned, without our being able to look into every hole and corner where people are melting coins to be made into dishes or thimbles, or looking out their bars of gold and silver to be coined. Though you may not see all that may be done in the darkness of this night, you may possibly perceive something to-morrow which will make you quite sure that there has been a change in the supply of money."

Clara wished she might, since the cheapness of goods this day was not in reality an advantageous thing. She clearly saw that it was not so,

though she herself happened to have secured a vast return for her small stock of money. She perceived that whenever she and her father wanted to sell (which all were obliged to do in turn) they would have as much more than usual to give of labour or goods as they had this day received, unless the quantity of money in circulation could be increased.

"I suppose," sighed she, "if I could get at the little holes under those trees where the mice are asleep for the winter, I ought to kill as many of them as I could catch before morning. The snow is too deep, however. But I do wish we had something for money that might be had without killing such pretty little creatures."

Paul explained, very sagely, how right it was to sacrifice the inferior animals when man could be served by their deaths; and how much better it was that a score of field mice should be cut off in the midst of a deep sleep, than that there should be dispute and deprivation among a little society who had too many troubles already. He ended by asking on what terms Clara would part with her young rein-deer this night? On none whatever, she said at first. She had so pleased herself with the idea of feeding and training the animal; and her father was so delighted with her possession of it. But when she was reminded that money would at any time buy rein-deer, while it was an unique circumstance that a single rein-deer should supply a whole society with money, she began to see Paul's object in wishing to possess the animal, and referred him, with

some regrets, to her father for an arrangement of the terms of the bargain. They were soon settled. Paul did not want, for his own use, the money he meant to manufacture out of the hide in the course of the night. He only wished to prevent the rich merchant possessing himself of all the disposable goods of the settlement, and readily promised that Andreas should keep the carcase, and have half the funds provided out of the skin. Andreas heard slight sounds from one corner of the hut that night, which led him to think that his little daughter was crying herself to sleep, as quietly as she might, at the close of her day of trafficking; but he said to himself that children must learn to bear disappointments, whether about dolls or young rein-deer; and that it would have been a sin to deprive his neighbours of a stock of money, and himself of so fine a means of improving his resources, for the sake of a little girl's fancy to have a tame animal to play with. Clara would have said so too, if she had been asked; but her tears did not flow the less.

It was a busy night in Paul's hut. He put himself under the management of his wife, who was well skilled in handling hides; and before morning the skin was decently cleaned, and economically cut up, and a new supply of the circulating medium distributed among the dwellings of as many as chose to buy back of the merchant some of the articles he had obtained from them the day before; or, at least, to refuse him the power of making any more purchases on terms so ruinous to them.

Chapter VI.

THE PATRIOT'S ALTAR.

All possible pains were taken by the Russian superintendents of the mine to prevent the convicts under their charge from hearing anything of what was going forward in their own country, or even in Russia; and nothing would have been easier than to keep them in utter ignorance, if the Poles in the neighbourhood had all been miners, shut up during the day in the chambers of the earth, and at night in huts at the mouth of the mine. But those of them who were crown peasants were not so easily kept within bounds. Paul visited the hamlets on the shores of the Baïkal, and made acquaintance with every travelling merchant who could speak in his wife's tongue or his own; and Ernest was for ever on the look-out for parties of convicts on their way to Kamtchatka, and contrived to cross the path of several, while professedly out on a hunting expedition. He never failed to procure some information from these meetings, or to communicate it within a short time to his companions in exile. The hours of the night were their own; and there were many nights, even in the very depth of winter, when they could venture abroad to some one of the several places of meeting appointed for such occasions. The miners could sometimes foretell the approach of a procession of prisoners from Europe, by

what went on within the works. If there was more diligence used than in common to prepare certain quantities of silver for removal, it was a token that an escort was on the road, which was to be met by the guards of the treasure, in order to exchange their respective charges,—prisoners and precious metal. As often as Owzin was detained longer than usual in the galleries of the mine, or Taddeus was overworked in the smelting-house, Ernest prepared for a long walk across the steppe, or daily mounted the heights in his neighbourhood to watch for indications of a march along the horizon which bounded the vast plain of snow. It was forbidden to all persons whatever, except the armed peasants who formed a part of the escort, to follow the waggons which contained the royal treasure, or dog the heels of the personages in green and red who protected it. Since to follow was impossible, it only remained to precede the train; and this Ernest did, keeping a little in advance, concealing himself in woods, or behind ridges of snow, and looking out from rock or tree for the glittering of sabres when the sun was above the horizon, and the glare of pine-torches after darkness came on. Having thus guided himself towards the point of the two processions meeting, he began his hunting, and managed to fall in with the party of convicts in time to be questioned whether the escort from Nertchinsk might be speedily expected, and to exchange signs and words with any of the prisoners who might be his countrymen.

He found himself aided in his object by the country people, whose compassion for the exiles is as remarkable as the hard-heartedness of the Russian guards. "Have you fallen in with the criminals?" asks a Russian soldier, sent out to reconnoitre. "I passed a company of unfortunates," is the reply. If bidden to chain two restive prisoners to their iron bar, the peasant obeys unwillingly, and takes the first opportunity of releasing them, and bearing their burden himself. Several such did Ernest fall in with, and interest in his cause; and when he had once learned to pardon their compassionate opposition to all fancies of escape, and to admit with them that the attempt would be insane, he thankfully accepted their good offices on his expeditions, and was grateful for the connivance of the two or three who could have told tales of certain midnight meetings on the shores of the Charmed Sea. Few dared to look abroad at such an hour in such a scene, or doubted that the chaunts they heard, and the red lights they saw flickering on the steep or among the dark pine stems, were connected with the spirits of the deep; but there were a few who could distinguish human forms hovering about the blaze, and shrewdly guess that the lake spirits would not perpetually sing of Warsaw.

It was mid-winter—a winter which already seemed as if it would never end—when Ernest set forth to seek traces of a party of "unfortunates" in the manner above described, and left directions that as many as wished for tidings

from Poland should meet him on the third night from hence, at an appointed spot overhanging the Baïkal. He accomplished his object; was perceived from a distance with his rifle pointed, and apparently not regarding the procession—summoned to be questioned, and permitted to make inquiries in return. As usual, he received the oracular assurance, "Order reigns in Warsaw." As usual, he caught the flashing glance, and marked the compression of lip with which the words were listened to by as many as were within hearing. But the train was not like any which he had before seen cross the desert. The convicts were Poles who had been enrolled as soldiers in the condemned regiments, and who, having shown symptoms of discontent, were being transported to serve as sentinels on the frontiers of China. As there would be no possibility of escape for themselves, it was thought that they would be trustworthy guardians of any exiles of a different class who might attempt it; the supposition going on the principle too commonly acted upon—that privation induces jealousy. All these poor men were objects of deep compassion to Ernest, who thought the lot of the military exile far more painful than his own, or that of his mining companions. The being under incessant supervision, and subjected to military punishments of the most barbarous kind, were evils purely additional to those suffered by other classes of exiles. What this military punishment amounted to in some cases, he had the opportunity of perceiving in the instance of

one of the prisoners who was conveyed in a kibitka; the injuries he had received from the knout rendering him incapable of walking.

As it was usual to leave under the care of the peasantry as many of the "unfortunates" as fell sick on the road, or were found unable to travel, Ernest was surprised that this soldier should be proceeding with the rest. He was told that the man himself desired not to be parted from his companions; and had persevered in his journey thus far at the risk of dying before he should reach the frontiers of China. Ernest thought it probable that he would consent to stop and be taken care of, if he could do so among his own countrymen; and he advanced to the vehicle for the purpose of conversing with those within.

"Are you Poles?" he asked in a low voice, and in his own tongue.

The sufferer tore open his clothes, and showed the well-known token,—the Polish eagle, branded upon his breast. He had impressed it there, as he was not allowed to carry the emblem about with him in any form in which it could be taken from him. A few more words communicated all that remained to be told,—in what capacity—civil, not military,—he had served the cause; how he fell under punishment; and, in short, that this was no other than Cyprian.

When he heard whom he was talking to, and how near he was to those whom he loved best, he no longer objected to be left behind on the

road. The only fear was lest his eagerness should be too apparent. With a solemn caution, Ernest left him, to say to the escort that he thought the prisoner in a very dangerous state, and that there was a hut a few wersts further on where he could be received and nursed till able to pursue his journey to the frontier. He added that this hut was in the near neighbourhood of Russian soldiers, who would be able to see that the convict did not escape on his recovery. The guard condescended to inquire of Cyprian himself whether he chose to remain; and observed that he must feel himself much worse since he had given over his obstinacy.

Ernest denied himself all further intercourse with the prisoners on the way, and seemed more disposed to divert himself with his rifle than to converse. When within sight of his own hut, he pointed it out very coolly, took charge of Cyprian as if he was merely performing a common act of humanity, and asked for directions as to pursuing the route to the frontiers when the sick man should have become again fit for duty. Nothing could appear simpler, or be more easily managed than the whole affair; and the procession went on its way, without either the guard or the remaining unfortunates having any idea that Cyprian was not left among perfect strangers.

There was but little time for intercourse at first. The hour of appointment was just at hand, and Alexander and Paul were gone to keep it, Ernest supposed, as their huts were empty.

"O, take me with you!" exclaimed Cyprian. "Only give me your arm, and let me try if I cannot walk. To think of their being so near, and I left behind alone! Cannot you take me with you?"

Ernest pronounced it impossible. Cyprian could not survive the fatigue, the exposure, the agitation; and, if he did, how was Sophia to bear the shock? By proving to him that it was only in his character of invalid that he could secure a day's permission to remain, he quieted him.

"And now," continued Ernest, "give me tidings that I may bear to those who are waiting for me. Briefly,—how fares it with our heritage?"

"Our heritage! Our patrimony!" exclaimed Cyprian, dwelling on the terms by which the Poles lovingly indicate their country. "Alas! will it ever be ours? They told you too truly—'Order reigns in Warsaw!'"

"But what kind of order? Repose or secret conspiracy? None are so orderly as conspirators while conspiring; and repose is impossible already."

"Alas! it is neither. There is order, because the disorderly, as the Emperor calls them, are removed day by day. There is no conspiracy, because all who could organize one are in chains like you, or badged like me;" and Cyprian tore with his teeth the black eagle which marked his uniform. Ernest observed, with a melancholy

smile, that not even this climate would blanch the Russian eagle.

"Therefore," continued he, "we have each a Polish eagle, caught at midnight, (when the superstitions of our enemies have blinded them;) slaughtered with patriotic rites; and preserved in secret." And, after making sure that no prying eyes were looking in, he drew out from a recess behind the screen, a large white eagle, stuffed with great care into a resemblance of the beloved Polish standard. Cyprian clasped his hands, as if about to worship it. Its presence was some consolation to him for Ernest's departure.

"But how," asked the latter, "are the brave conveyed away from Warsaw? On biers or in chains?"

"No one knows," replied Cyprian. "They who informed me can tell no more than that our friends are seen to enter their own houses at night, and in the morning they are gone. Some few are known to have been called to their doors, or into the streets, on slight pretences, and to have returned to their expecting households no more. Then there is silent weeping during the hours of darkness; and if grief is clamorous, it is shut into the inner chambers whence none may hear it. Thus order reigns in Warsaw."

"And is this all the comfort I may carry?" asked Ernest, hoarsely.

"No: there is yet more. Tell any who may be fathers that there is no danger of their children growing up traitors like themselves. The Em-

peror takes them under his paternal care, and teaches them, among other things,—loyalty."

"And the mothers——"

"Are called upon to rejoice that the children will never be exposed to their fathers' perils. There is much wonder at their ingratitude when they follow, with lamentations, the waggons in which their young sons are carried away to be put under a better training than that of parents."

Ernest asked no more. These were tidings enough for one night. He strode on over the frozen snow, the fires which burned within him seeming to himself sufficient to convert this expanse of snow around him into a parched and droughty desert. There was, however, something in the aspect of a Siberian mid-winter night which never failed to calm the passions of this ardent patriot, for, at least, to give them a new and less painful direction. Ernest was of that temperament to which belongs the least debasing and most influential kind of superstition. He had not been superstitious in the days when there was full scope for all his faculties and all his energies in the realities of social life; but now, the deprivation of his accustomed objects of action, and the impression, at striking seasons, of unwonted sights and sounds, subjected him to emotions of which he could not, in his former circumstances, have framed a conception. Though he this night quitted his hut as if in desperate haste, he did not long proceed as if he feared being too late for his appointment. He lingered in the pine

wood to listen to the moaning and wailing which came from afar through the motionless forests, like the music of a vast Æolian harp. He knew that it was caused by the motion of the winds pent under the icy surface of the Charmed Sea; but he listened breathlessly, as if they came from some conscious agents, whose mission was to himself. So it was also when the silent action of the frost in fissures of the rock at length loosened masses of stone, and sent them toppling down the steep, while the crash reverberated, and the startled eagle rushed forth into the night air, and added her screaming to the commotion. Then Ernest was wont to watch eagerly in what direction the bird would wing her flight, and regard as an omen for his country whether she once more cowered in darkness, or flew abroad to prevent the roused echoes from sleeping again.

When strong gusts of an icy sharpness swept suddenly through the clefts of the mountains to the north, carrying up the white canopy of the woods in whirling clouds which sparkled in the moonlight, and creating a sudden turmoil among the blackened pine tops, he watched whether they stooped and raised themselves again, or were snapped off and laid low; and involuntarily made them the interpreters of his doubts about the next struggle into which he and his countrymen might enter.

Thus he lingered this night, and was therefore the last of the little company appointed to as-

semble at their midnight altar. This altar was one of the mysterious sculptured or inscribed rocks which appear at rare intervals in these deserts, the records, it is supposed, of ancient superstitions. The one chosen by the Poles for their point of rendezvous, bore figures of animals rudely carved on a misshapen pedestal; and on a natural pillar which sprang from it were characters which no one within the memory of man had been found able to read. From this pedestal, the snow was duly swept before the exiles gathered round it to sing their patriotic hymns, or celebrate worship according to the customs of their country; and little Clara engaged that when the snow was gone, no creeping mosses should be allowed to deform the face of the altar. As for living things, they were too scarce and too welcome to be considered unclean, and the wild pigeons were as welcome to perch on this resting-place, after a weary flight over the Charmed Sea, as the swallow to build in the tabernacle of old. It was on the verge of the steep, where it plunged abrupt and fathoms deep into the green waters, that this altar stood; a conspicuous point which would have been dangerous but for the superstitions of all who lived within sight, since the blaze of the exiles' fire gleamed like a beacon on the height, and flickered among the pine stems behind, and shone from the polished black ice beneath.

As Ernest approached, unperceived, he first drew near to Sophia, who sat with folded arms

on the verge of the rock, watching the white gleams of the northern lights, which shot up into the midheaven from behind the ridge of the opposite mountains, dimming the stars in that quarter, and contrasting strongly with the red glow of the fire which behind sent up wreaths of dim smoke among the rocks. Sophia's mood was less quiet than it should have been to accord with the scenery she was apparently contemplating. Neither superstition, nor any other influence seemed to have the power of soothing her. She was speaking, from time to time, in a querulous or an indifferent tone to some one who leaned against the altar on its shadowy side. It was Taddeus's voice which was heard occasionally in reply. The other Poles were collected round the fire; and their own voices, and the crackling and snapping of the burning wood, prevented their hearing that which it grieved Ernest's heart to listen to.

"Well, I do not know what you would have," said Sophia; "I came out this freezing night, instead of going to my warm bed, just because my mother looks so miserable whenever I wish to stay behind. I neither wish to worship, nor to be patriotic, nor to see you all degrading yourselves with your superstitions. It was for my mother's sake that I came, and what more would you have?"

"It is not that, Sophia. You know it is not that."

"O, you want me to bear about gravity in

my looks, and to seem wrought upon by what passes; but that is going a step too far for my sincerity. There is no gravity in anything; and I cannot look as if I thought there was; and it is not my fault if my mother makes herself uneasy about my feeling so."

"No solemnity in anything! Not in those quivering lights, shot forth from the brow of Silence?"

"No. I used to think that there was in the lightning, and shrank from the flash lest it should destroy me. But we see no lightning here; and these fires do not scorch. They are idle, aimless things;—like all other things."

"Are your words aimless, Sophia, when they wound my mother and me? It is well that my father does not hear them all."

"They are aimless," returned Sophia. "I have no object in anything I say or do. I thought we grew tired of that in our childhood, Taddeus. We were for ever planning and scheming; and what has it all come to? The arbour that we built,—and the many professions that we chose for Frederick and you,——Pshaw! What childish nonsense it was!"

"And the protection I was to give to you, Sophia, if troubles arose; and your dependence upon me,—was this childish dreaming?"

"Was it not, Taddeus? What has your protection been to me? and how am I dependent on you, or any one? My happiness, indeed, seems to have depended on you more than any power

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but fate would have allowed. See what has come of that too!"

"O, Sophia! if I innocently destroyed your happiness, did not my own go with it? Have I not——"

"O, I have no doubt of all that; and I never thought of blaming anybody. It only proves how lightly and strangely things befall; and after this, you want me to see order and gravity in the march of events, and to march gravely with them. No! I have tried that too long; so I shall sit where I am while they sing, yonder. You had better go. Go, if you think it does you any good."

But Taddeus still lingered, while his sister kept her eyes fixed on the shooting lights.

"Sister!" he began, but seeing her writhe under the word, he added, in a low voice, "There is something in that word which touches you, however."

"No gravity,—no solemnity," she replied, laughing bitterly. "It carries no meaning but what old prejudice has put into it."

"No thoughts of the arbour we built? No remembrance of the days when you put a sword into my boyish hands, and a helmet on my head, and said you would nurse my infirmities and soothe my banishment, if either should befall me for freedom's sake?"

"You came out of the battle without a wound," replied Sophia, hastily.

"But not the less am I maimed for freedom's

sake. O, Sophia! what would you have had me do? Think of the oath! Think of the twenty-five years of vowed service——"

Sophia started up, and with a struggle repressed a fierce cry which had began to burst from her lips. She turned her eyes upon her brother with a look of unutterable hatred, and walked away down a winding path, in an opposite direction from the group behind the altar.

Ernest drew near to the despairing Taddeus, and was about to communicate his marvellous news; but the brother could not for a moment cease pouring out his boiling thoughts to one who understood their misery.

"To be so hated,—to be so wronged! And to be able to offer no excuse that does not pierce her heart, and make her passion more bitter than ever! And to think how more unhappy she is than even I——"

"We must lead her to embrace your consolation, and mine, and that of all of us. Come to our worship. Let it compose you, and perhaps she may return and listen. Perhaps she may find in it something——"

"Let it go on," said Taddeus. "The more wretched we are, the more need for prayer. My mother, too, listens for her children's voices, and she shall not have to mourn for all."

So saying, the two friends summoned their companions, and there, in a few moments, might be heard the mingled voices, ringing clear from the steep through the still midnight air, as they chaunted their prayer:—

God!—Scorched by battle-fires we stand
Before thee on thy throne of snows;
But, Father! in this silent land,
We seek no refuge nor repose:
We ask, and shall not ask in vain,—
"Give us our heritage again!"

Thy winds are ice-bound in the sea;
Thine eagle cowers till storms are past;
Lord! when those moaning winds are free,
When eagles mount upon the blast,
O! breathe upon our icy chain,
And float our Poland's flag again!

'Twas for thy cause we once were strong;
Thou wilt not doom that cause to death!
O God! our struggle has been long;
Thou wilt not quench our glimmering faith!
Thou hear'st the murmurs of our pain,—
"Give us our heritage again!"

"Who," said Ernest, emphatically, when the service was ended—"who will assist me to secure another white eagle?"

All understood at once that a countryman had joined their company. No further preparation was necessary for the story which Ernest had to tell; and in a few moments, the hardier men of the party were scaling the slippery rocks in search of their prey, while Lenore was looking for the path by which her daughter had descended, that she might join her and communicate the intelligence.

"Mother!" cried a gentle voice to her, as she was about to go down. She turned round, and saw Sophia leaning against a tree where she must have heard all. "Mother," repeated Sophia, scarcely audibly, "is this true?" and at the sight of Lenore's faint but genuine smile,

the poor girl laid her head on the shoulder which was formerly the resting-place of her troubles, and, once more,—after a long and dreary interval of estrangement,—wept without control.

Lenore gently led her towards the altar, on which they both leaned.

"My child," she said, "before we go to him, answer me what I ask. You do not, you say, believe that yon constellation is guided in its glittering round. You do not believe that the storm-bird, buffeted in its flight, is guided to its nest at last. Do you believe that Cyprian has been guided hither, or is it one of the events in which there is no seriousness, no import, that you are thus brought together in the heart of the desert?"

Sophia answered only by sinking down on her knees, and bowing her head upon the pedestal; but her sobs had ceased. When she looked up, it was Taddeus that supported her. She did not now start from his touch, but regarded him with a long gaze, like that with which she had parted from him when he went out to battle for Poland. It melted him into something more like self-reproach than all her past conduct had excited.

"You forgive me at last!" he cried. "Say you forgive me, Sophia!"

"Forgive *you!*" she exclaimed. "You who have fought; you who have suffered; you who have forborne!—And what have I forborne? I have——"

"You have been wounded in spirit. You

have suffered more than any of us, and therefore far be it from us to remember anything against you, Sophia. Now, your worst suffering is at an end, and you will be a comfort again to my mother,—to all of us."

Lenore did not join her children when she saw them hurrying away together in the direction of Ernest's dwelling. She followed them with her eyes as long as she could distinguish them between the trees of the wood, and then turned, strong in a new trust, to feed the fire, and await the appearance of her companions. It was not long before the screaming echoes told her that they had succeeded in their search; and presently after, the red embers died out upon the steep, and none were left to heed how the northern aurora silently sported with the night on the expanse of the Charmed Sea.

Chapter VII.

WISDOM FROM THE SIMPLE.

Of all the party of exiles, Andreas was the one whose troubles grew the fastest as time rolled on. The family of Owzin were consoled by the return of domestic peace; Sophia becoming more and more like her former self as Cyprian slowly, very slowly, repaid the cares of his nurses by his improvement in health. Paul made himself comfortable, as he would have done in the Barbary desert, if sentenced to transportation thither the

next year. He was not a man to doubt, in the intervals of his sighs for Poland, that he could find a wife and a home in any corner of the earth. What was in Ernest's mind nobody knew; but there was a new cheerfulness about him which it was difficult to account for, as he continued to disclaim all definite hope for Poland. He looked and moved like one who had an object, and yet it was impossible to conceive of any aim which could interest him through any other principle than his patriotism. Little Clara would have been the happiest of all, if her father had but allowed it. She thought less and less of Warsaw as fresh occupations and interests occurred to her in her new country. The opening of the spring brought a variety of employment to the industrious little girl. When the plates of ice with which she had made double window panes began to lose their clearness, and keep out the light rather than keep in the warmth,—when she had twisted and netted all the flax she could procure into fishing-nets,—when even the broadest pattens she could make or buy would not support the wearer in the melting snow,—and when, above all, the winter stock of food began to fail, she prepared herself eagerly for new devices, and watched day by day the advance of the season. She had not to wait long; and when the south winds began to blow, the suddenness of the change in the face of things startled her. As if by magic, a few genial days divided the mountainous district into two regions, as different in aspect as if tracts had been brought from the

torrid and frigid zones and joined together in one night. While on the north side of every mountain all was white and silent as ever, the south was brilliant with alpine vegetation, and the freed torrents were leaping noisily from rock to rock. The wild apricot put forth its lilac buds, and the rhododendron its purple flowers, over many a hill side: the orchis, the blue and white gentian, and the Siberian iris sprouted from the moss beneath the forest trees; and the blossoming elder and a variety of water lilies made the most impassable morasses as gay as the meadows of a milder climate. It was not from any idea that holiday time was come that Clara enjoyed this change. She knew that she must work all the year round; but it was much pleasanter to work in the open air than for eight months together within four walls, by the light of ice windows, and the close warmth of a brick oven. She now collected salt from the salt ponds of the steppe as fast as they melted; shovelled away the remaining snow wherever lilies were sprouting, that she might dig up the roots for food; and walked along the shores of the great lake when its tumbling waters once more began to heave and swell, and watched for whatever treasures they might cast up upon the beach. She even conceived the ambitious project of digging for a spring of water, as all that could otherwise be procured was either salt, muddy, or bitter; but here she was foiled, as she might have known she would be, if she had taken an opinion upon the subject. She dug successfully to the depth of one foot, and then found

the soil frozen too hard for her to make any impression. She tried again a month later, and got down another foot; but, as she afterwards learned, the strongest arm and the best tools can penetrate no deeper than two yards, before frost comes again and spoils the work.

Her father thought her a good child in respect of industry; but he acknowledged this with little pleasure, for no industry whatever could make a man rich in such a place. The longer he lived there, the more convinced he became of the dreadful truth, and therefore the more miserable he grew. Yet he was rich in comparison of his companions. He had hoarded many skins, and had more furniture and clothes than anybody else. But skins would soon be depreciated in value, he feared, from their abundance; and where would be his wealth then, unless he could foresee in time into what form it would be most profitable to transmute his hoard, while it retained its value as a representative of wealth, and before it should again become also a commodity? Night after night, when he came home from work in the mine, he dreaded to hear of an acquisition of skins. Day after day, did he look with jealous eyes on the heaps of silver which he must not touch, and long for the security of a metallic currency; that arrangement of civilized life which he most regretted. He saw—everybody saw—that some new medium of circulation must be adopted, if they wished to improve their state by further exchange with their neighbours; but the suggestion which was at last adopted did not come from him,

or from any of the wiser heads. It was Clara who introduced a new kind of money.

In walking along the muddy verge to which a spring flood had reached, and where it had deposited various curiosities, she observed, among little heaps and beds of shells, some very remarkable bones. Though light to carry, they were so large that she could not imagine what animal they could have belonged to. She collected all that she could find within a long space on either side the river, and carried her lap full to Paul, the friend of all others who, with the advantage of his wife's help, could most frequently and readily enlighten her in any matter of difficulty.

Emilia explained that these were the bones of a monster which had been made by the spirits of the Charmed Sea to carry them high and dry on its back through the deep waters: and that having once displeased them by diving in the deepest part, they had, as a punishment, chained it down at the bottom of the neighbouring river, whence its bones were cast up as often as the spring floods overspread the country. Clara wondered at the spirits for not swimming or flying over at once, instead of taking so much trouble to create and then destroy a monster; and she liked Paul's account of the matter better than his wife's. Paul was not aware that spirits had anything to do with mammoths elsewhere, and did not believe that they had here, or that the mammoth ought to be called a monster. He simply called the mammoth a huge animal, such as is not seen

in these days, and any traces of which, therefore, are a curiosity. He advised Clara not to throw away these curious bones.

"Papa will not let me keep them," she replied. "He will sell them, if he can find anybody to buy."

"I do not know who should do that, my dear. We have no cabinets of curiosities in such a place as this."

"I do think," said Clara, after a moment's thought, "that these bones would make very good money. You see, we could easily find out exactly how many may be had, and it can never happen, as it does with the skins, that we shall have twice as many one day as the day before."

"It may happen, my dear, that a second flood or storm may throw up more bones. It is not likely, to be sure, that such a thing should come to pass twice in one season; but it is possible."

"And if it does," said Clara, "could not we agree that some one person should take care of them; or that whatever bones are found should belong to us all, and be put in one particular place, to lie till we want more money? We cannot do this with skins, because they are useful in other ways, and it would be very hard to prevent anybody from getting as many as he could; but nobody would think it hard that he might not keep mammoth bones, because they would be of no use to him except for money."

"But would they not be slily kept for money, Clara? Would every one bring in the mammoth bones he might find to the treasury?"

"If they would trust me," said the little girl, "I would go out after a storm or a flood, and bring in any that might be lying about. But think how very seldom this would happen; and how very often we get a fresh supply of skins!"

"Very true, Clara; and I, for one, would trust you to bring home all you might find. But there is more to be considered than you are aware of before we change our currency; and I very much doubt whether your father, among others, would agree to it."

"You would give him as much of our new money as is worth the skins he has laid by," said Clara, "or he would not hear of the change; and indeed it would not be at all fair. O yes; everybody must be paid equal to what he has at present; and if that is properly done, I should think they will all like the plan, as it will be less easy than ever to cheat or make mistakes. You see so few of these bones are like one another that, when once different values are put upon them, one may tell at a glance what they stand for, as easily as one may tell a ruble from a ducat. And then, again, there can be no cheating. If we were to clip and break off for ever, one could not make several pieces of bone into a whole bone, as one may with skins, or with gold and silver."

"But these bones will wear out in time, Clara; and some will crumble to pieces sooner than others."

"Not faster than from year to year," argued Clara. "And next spring, when perhaps we

can get more, it will be very easy to give out new ones, and take in the old, and break them up entirely before everybody's eyes. O, I think this is the best sort of money we have thought of yet."

Paul agreed with her, and promised to call the little company together to consult about the matter.

The first thing that struck everybody was that these bones would be without some of the most important qualities which recommend coined money as a medium of exchange.

"What are we to say to their value?" asked Taddeus. "There is no cost of production, except the little trouble and time Clara will spend in picking them up."

"It is plain that they will have no value in themselves," observed Paul, "but only such as we shall put upon them by common agreement."

"That is," said Ernest, "they will be a sign of value only, and not a commodity. Will a mere sign of value serve our purpose as a standard of value? That is the question. For the thing we most want is a standard of value. It was in this respect that our skins failed us."

"The bones will serve our own little party as a standard of value, well enough," replied Paul. "The difficulty will be when we come to deal with our neighbours, who not only use a different currency, but to whom mammoth bones are absolutely worthless. When we used skins, it was difficult to impress upon traders the full value at which we estimated our money; but it had some

real value with them from its being a commodity as well as a sign."

"Then we have to choose between the two inconveniences," observed Ernest; "whether to fix a standard which none will agree to but ourselves, but which will serve our purpose well; or whether to use a *medium* of exchange whose value is acknowledged by the neighbouring traders, but which is, in fact, no standard to us, as it varies with the success or failure of every shooting expedition."

"What a pity it seems," observed Paul, "that all the world cannot agree upon some standard of value! What a prodigious deal of trouble it would save!"

"And where," asked Ernest, "would you find a commodity which is held in equal esteem in all countries, and by all classes? Even gold and silver, the most probable of any, would never do. There are parts of the world where lumps of them are tossed about as toys: where they are had without cost of production; while here, you see what an expensive apparatus is required to work out any portion of them;—an expense of capital and of human machinery——"

Paul, dreading this part of the subject, interrupted him with,—

"*Well*, but why have any commodity at all? If we cannot find any existing thing which all would agree to value alike, why not have an imaginary thing? Instead of saying that my bow is worth a pound of cinnamon, and a pound of cinnamon worth three pairs of scissors, why

not say that the bow and the pound of cinnamon are worth nine units, and each pair of scissors worth three units? What could be easier than to measure commodities against one another thus?"

"Commodities whose value is already known, I grant you, Paul: but what would you do with new ones whose value is unknown? It is to measure these that we most want a standard."

"We must estimate the cost of production of the new article, and compare it with——"

"Aye; with what? With some other commodity, and not with an ideal standard. You see it fails you at the very moment you want it. When we measure our lances against one another, we can express their comparative length by saying that one measures three and the other four spaces,—a space being merely an imaginary measure; but if we want to ascertain the length of a pine stem which has fallen across our path, we must reduce this imaginary measure to a real one. Nothing can be used as a standard which has not properties in common with the thing to be estimated. That which has length can alone measure length; and that which has value can alone measure value."

"How then can an ideal standard of value be used at all?"

"Because an ideal value alone is referred to it. But that abstract value is obtained through the reality which is ascertained by the comparison of commodities. When this abstraction is arrived at, an abstract standard may serve to express it; but new commodities must be mea-

sured by a standard which is itself a commodity, or a tangible sign which is, by general agreement, established in its place."

"Then, after all, we must come round to the point that coined metals are the best kind of money, admitting, as they do, an ineffaceable stamp of value, and thus uniting the requisites of a sign and a commodity."

"The best, at all events, up to a certain point in the progress of society, and, in general, till all societies which make mutual exchanges have reached that point. Neither we, nor the travelling merchants of Siberia, nor the cultivators with whom we deal, have yet reached this point; and there is no doubt that it would be greatly for our advantage to be possessed of coined metals as a medium of exchange. As we cannot have them, these mammoth bones must answer our purposes. They promise to do so better than any device we have yet made trial of."

Some one suggested that a metal medium might be procured by a little trouble and expense, if it should be thought worth while. Most of the Mongolian women they saw had small weights of virgin gold or silver fastened to their braids of hair, and might be easily prevailed on to part with them; and some persons in the present company had chanced to pick up morsels of silver in the beds of streams, and among the fragments of rock on the mountain side. Where would be the difficulty of impressing marks upon these, and thus instituting a sort of rude coinage? It was, however, agreed that

the temptation of clipping pieces of precious metal of an irregular form would be too strong to be safely ventured; to say nothing of the cost of production, which must be disproportionately heavy in the case of a small society which had no apparatus for facilitating the work of coining.

It would be difficult, Ernest observed, to have any coin of a low denomination, as the cost of production would confer a high value on the smallest fragments of gold or silver; and, as for lead, it was too plentiful, and too easily melted and marked, to be made money of in their district. It appeared to Taddeus that there was no objection to their society having a new commodity of considerable arbitrary value in its possession, if it was once settled by what party the expense of its preparation should be defrayed. Some authority would of course be instituted by which the work of coining would be undertaken. Would the labour be bestowed freely by that party? If not, by whom?

"Why should we expect," asked Ernest, "that any one should undertake so troublesome an office without reward? I know it is expected of governments, and I think unreasonably, that they should issue money from the mint without charge for coining it; unreasonably, because, supposing the supply to be restricted, it is exposing the state to too great hazard of a deficiency, and the government to the danger of an incessant drain, to make, by arbitrary means, the exchangeable value of coin equal with that of bullion; and because, supposing the supply to

be left unrestricted, not only is this danger much increased, but great partiality would be shown to the holders of the precious metals by conferring gratis an additional value on their commodity. Those who, by having their metals coined by the government, are saved the trouble and expense of weighing and assaying them in the shape of bullion, may as reasonably be made to pay for this advantage as those who give a piece of broad-cloth into the hands of the tailor to receive it back in the shape of a coat. Among ourselves, therefore, the fair way would be, if we adopt a metal medium, first to establish a little mint in some corner of the smelting-house, and then to issue our money, if the quantity was restricted, at a higher value than the unformed metal would bear in the market if unrestricted, under the condition that a certain portion should be clipped off each bit before it was stamped, in order to defray the expenses; or that every one who brought metal should bring payment for the advantage of having it made into money."

"We cannot afford this yet," observed Paul. "Let us begin picking up gold and silver whenever we meet with it, in order to such an arrangement hereafter; but, meanwhile, let us be satisfied with our mammoth bones."

Andreas, who liked none of these speculations on the effect of change, because he did not like change, protested vehemently against the substitution of bones for skins, or metals for either. Nothing, he declared, could be so disastrous to all trading societies as alterations in the currency.

They invaded the security of property, altering the respective values of almost all exchangeable articles, rendering every man in the community, except him who has nothing, utterly uncertain of the amount of his property, and arbitrarily reversing the conditions of the wealthy and the moderately provided. Ernest allowed all this to be true in the case of a large society, where the machinery of exchanges is complicated, and contracts subsist which comprise a considerable extent of time. In small societies, also, he allowed, that such a change is an inconvenience not to be lightly incurred; but, in the present case, there was necessarily a choice of evils. Their present currency was liable to excessive and uncontrollable fluctuations. Would it be better to continue suffering under these, or to undergo the inconvenience and trouble at once of valuing the property of each member of the society, and fixing the denominations of their medium accordingly? As there were no contracts existing between themselves or with their neighbours, no stocks of goods laid by whose value could be depreciated or increased, it seemed to him that the change would be one of pure advantage, and that the sooner it was made the better.

Every body but Andreas thought so too, and all were willing to conciliate him by winking at his extraordinary accumulation of skins, and to buy off his opposition by giving him a noble stock of the new money in consideration of the loss he must sustain by their being no longer any thing more in the market than a commodity.

Chapter VIII.

THE PATRIOT'S MARTYRDOM.

As the summer advanced, and Cyprian seemed recovering completely from the dreadful state in which the infliction of the knout had left him, anxious thoughts began to take possession of the whole party. The day must be approaching when he would be sent for to resume his military duty; that service which was unutterably loathsome to him in the bare idea, and which must now be more than ever degrading from his having undergone an ignominious punishment. The slightest remark on the improvement in his health, on the advance of the season, or on the destination of any of his exiled countrymen, threw him into an agitation; and there was one circumstance which excited his indignant surprise to a degree which made it difficult to keep his feelings to himself. This was Ernest's curiosity concerning all that he had undergone; a curiosity which seemed to have no consideration for the pain such recitals must give to one who must again undergo the miseries he described. It was marvellous that one like Ernest—so generous to the feelings of others, so sensitive in his own—should be perpetually on the watch for mention of all the details of tyranny which Cyprian could give from his own experience, but would fain have withheld.

"Ask me no more," cried Cyprian, one day,

with a look of agony. "I will tell you anything you please about our black bread and miserable bedding, and about our night service and day slavery; but ask me no more about our officers' treatment of us, for I cannot bear to think of it."

"You must tell me more," replied Ernest, fixing his eyes upon him with an indescribable expression of eagerness. "So he made you all shout that infernal cry in praise of Nicholas, every night and morning?"

"Aye; and as often besides as he chose to suspect any one of discontent; be it once a week or ten times a day. In a little while, my heart heaved sick at the very sound of it, and when my turn came, my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, if the day was as cold as Christmas day in Kamtchatka. I could not make light of it, and wink aside like some of them. It would have been well if I could, when the worse struggle came; except that, to be sure, I should not have been here now."

"So he insisted on more than the shout that day? Tell me about it."

"I thought I had told you before," said Cyprian, impatiently, and he spoke very rapidly as he proceeded. "We made some little difficulty about stripping the country people of their provisions for our own use, and just offered to go without our full rations till more were brought in. He called this mutiny, and began to talk about Poland,—the blasphemous wretch!—and called upon us to shout, as usual. I waited a moment to get voice; he marked me, and ordered me,

not only to shout, but to sing a damned chorus about Praga that they boast they sang when——"

"Well, well, I know which you mean. Go on."

"I would not, and could not sing it, happen what might; and so I told him."

"How should you?" said Ernest, with a grim smile. "You who always said, when you had no thought of being a soldier, that it revolted you to see men made machines of; as soldiers are under the best management. How should you bear to be made something so much worse than a machine,—a slave with the soul of a free man,—a mocking-stock while you were full of gloomy wrath? No! helpless you must be; but you could at least make your slavery passive,—one degree above the lowest."

"Passive enough I made it," said Cyprian, covering his face with his hands. "They could make nothing of me,—except the one thing they did not choose to make me—a corpse! I hoped to die under it,—I meant it,—and I supposed they meant I should; for I have known many an one killed under the knout for a less offence; but they let me live, just to go through it again; for that hellish chorus will I never sing;—or never, at least, at that man's bidding."

"Never; you never shall!" cried Ernest, fervently.

Cyprian looked at him surprised, and said,

"Do you know, Ernest, I would not have borne from any other man such questioning about all these matters as I have taken patiently from you."

"Patiently!" repeated Ernest, with a sad smile.

"Yes, Sir, patiently, as you may agree with me, if you happen to suppose that I can feel like you. You stalk off into the woods, or look as if you were going to curse the universe, the moment any one touches you about Poland; and you expect me to sit still and be questioned about my own degradation and torture, when you know that every tale I tell you is a picture of what is to come."

"Well, well, forgive me. You know my interest in you——"

"Many thanks for it, Ernest! A very considerate interest indeed! Why, your never catechizing me before Sophia shows that you remember that it is not the pleasantest subject in the world; but you do not give me the benefit of it."

"You shall question me as much as you like when I have like tales to tell."

"And when will that be? I have told you a hundred times that your life of a serf is beatitude in comparison with that of a private in the condemned regiments; especially if he happens to have been a patriot."

And Cyprian went on to draw the comparison, to which Ernest listened with the same grave smile. It was pardonable in Cyprian to take this for a smile of self-gratulation, and therefore to feel something as like contempt as any one had ever dared to feel for Ernest.

"We will compare notes hereafter, when we have both had our experience," observed Ernest, quietly.

"Aye, in the next world, where I shall soon be waiting for you; for I consider that, in going to the frontiers of two countries, I am going to the frontiers of two worlds. If they do not knout me to death, my heart will certainly burst one of these days. And then Sophia,—you must—— But no; she will not take a word or a kind office from any one when I am away, they say. Well, I shall have my story ready for you when you follow me past those frontiers we were speaking of; for I shall not mind telling it there, nor will you perhaps care to hear it;—in a passionless state——"

"Passionless!" cried Ernest. "A passionless state hereafter! I tell you, Cyprian, if our Polish eagle does not soar to me with tidings which shall feed my passion of patriotism, I will come down and vent it, as if I were still a mortal man."

"Hush, hush! how do we know——"

"Full as well as you when you talk of a passionless state."

"I wish this were so," muttered Cyprian.

"Do not wish that, Cyprian. There are passions which may work out their natural and holy issues even in these wilds. Let us not repudiate them; for they become more necessary to the life of our being in proportion as others are violently stifled or slowly starved out. The next time you see yon star rising between those two peaks, remember that I told you this."

Cyprian inwardly groaned at the thought that before the time of that rising should have arrived,

he might be far out of sight of the two peaks; and he began already to hate that particular star.

When it next appeared, some nights after, he again inwardly groaned; but it was with shame, and a different kind of grief from that with which he had anticipated misery to himself and Sophia. Ernest had slipped away in the night to meet the summons which was on the way for Cyprian, and was now journeying towards the frontier,—in what direction no one knew; so that he could not be overtaken and remonstrated with. There would have been little use in such a measure, if it had been practicable; for Ernest was not one to change his purposes.

The only person whom he saw before his departure was Clara; and that was for the purpose of leaving a message, as there were no writing materials within reach, and also of accomplishing the change of dress which was necessary to his passing for Cyprian. He called her up, and employed her to get possession of Cyprian's uniform, on some pretence which should keep him out of suspicion of being concerned; and when he had put it on, he gave his own clothes into her charge.

"Give him these, my dear, when he wakes, and tell him that I leave him my hut and land too; and my name,—Number Seven. Sophia will show him the way to our altar, and she will help him to find out whether what I said was true, when we were looking at yonder star over the mountain top. Be sure you tell him this."

"But will not you be back to tell him yourself?"

"No. We have planned when and where to speak about this again; as he will remember.—And now go to bed, Clara, and thank you for helping me. Have you any thing more to say, my dear?" he continued, in answer to an uncertain, beseeching look she cast upon him. "If you have any troubles, tell me them; but be quick."

"I do not know what to do," replied Clara, sinking into tears. "I wish I knew whether I ought to tell. My father,..... he is getting so very rich; and I had rather he should not, unless other people do; but he would be so angry if I showed any body."

"Why should you show your father's hoards, my dear? Who has any business with them but himself?"

"No, no; it is not a hoard. It is not any thing he has saved."

"Then it is something that he has found. He has lighted upon a treasure, I suppose. That is the reason why he has grown so fond of strolling towards the Baïkal lately. The peasants thought they were making a believer of him; but we could not understand it; though, to be sure, we might have guessed how it was that money had become so plentiful lately. He has found a fossil-bed, no doubt. Do you know where it is?"

Clara nodded, and whispered that it was she who had discovered it.

"Indeed! Well; you have done all you can do, and now you may leave it to chance to discover the matter. Meanwhile, take this basket-

full of bones,—all the money I have,—and divide them equally among every body but your father. It will make his share worth less, you know, to give every body else more, and this will help to set matters straight till the secret comes out, which it will do, some day soon."

"I wish it may," said Clara, "and yet I dread it. Paul's wife peeps and prys about every where; and as often as she goes towards the lake, my father frowns at me and says—'You have told Emilia.' But how ashamed I shall be when it comes out!—What will you do without your money when you come back? Had not I better lay it by for you, where nobody can touch it till you come to take it away yourself? In one of the caves——"

"If you do," said Ernest, smiling, "some learned traveller will find it some hundreds of years hence, and write a book, perhaps, to describe an unaccountable deposit of fossil remains. No, Clara. When Cyprian and I have the conversation we have planned, we shall want no money; and he and the rest had better make the most of it in the meanwhile. You are a good little daughter, and I need not tell you to do what you can for your father,—whatever he desires you that you do not feel to be wrong."

"Pumping and all," sighed Clara.

"Pumping! I did not know we had such a grand thing as a pump among us."

"It is in the mine," said Clara, sadly. "The water drains in to the gallery where my father works, and he thinks I can earn something by

pumping; and he says I shall be very safe beside him."

"What can he mean?" cried Ernest. "Such a pursuit of wealth is absolutely insane. What can he ever do with it in a place like this?"

"He thinks that we may get leave to go to Tobolsk when he has enough to begin to trade with. He asks me how I should like to be one of the richest people in Tobolsk when he is dead. I had much rather stay here; and I am sure I do not care whether we have twenty or a hundred bones laid by, when we have once got all that we want to eat, and dress and warm ourselves with. I wish he would not talk of going to Tobolsk."

"If we can get back to Poland——"

"O! you are going there!" cried Clara, with sparkling eyes.

Ernest shook his head mournfully, kissed the little girl's forehead, and departed, leaving her looking after him till he disappeared in the silvery night haze. Ernest passed himself for Cyprian at his new destination; and the officer who was expecting him was agreeably surprised at his proving so much better a soldier than he had been represented. Unspoiled (strange to say) in body and mind by the knout, and always prepared with a dumb obedience which was particularly convenient on such a station, he became a sort of favourite, and was well reported of. The only thing that ever made him smile was the periodical assurance of this, for which he was expected to be grateful. He was wont

to receive it with an expression of countenance which, as it could not be interpreted, afforded no tangible ground of offence; and he continued to pass for one of the least troublesome of the exiled Poles who were stationed along the frontier.

Chapter IX.

THE PATRIOT'S VOW.

It was a stormy evening when the little company assembled round their altar to celebrate the marriage of Cyprian and Sophia. The long summer day was drawing to a close amid an unusual commotion of the elements. There was no rain, but the wind swept over the waters, and the sheeted lightning came forth from its hiding place among the clouds on the mountain top. Little Clara was alone on the steep long before the rest of the party came. She never forgot that the altar was her charge; and she was now employed in cleansing the pedestal from the young mosses which spread rapidly in the crevices, and among the mysterious characters of the inscription. She could not help being startled by the lightning, and wishing that the thunder would come at once to mingle with the dash and roar of the waves below, instead of waiting till the mass of clouds should grow still more formidable, and overspread the whole sky. Once

or twice she wished herself with her father in the cave, where she knew he was gone to bring away more mammoth bones; and then again she felt that the sense of guilt which always beset her in that place would make it much more terrible in a storm than her present solitude made the exposed spot on which she stood. She was heartily glad, however, when Paul and his wife made their appearance.

"You néed not have troubled yourself to pile this wood, Clara," said Paul. "No fire can be kept in while such a wind as this is blowing."

"Do you know," said Clara, "one blow of the north wind as I came up changed the look of everything it touched. All the pools had a little crust of ice over them in a minute, all the leaves of the plants in the open places turned red and yellow, and the blossoms shrivelled up ready to drop off."

On hearing this, Emilia looked very grave. The wind that did this while the sun was high on a summer day, was an ill-boding wind, she whispered; and was sent to tell that the sea spirits were about to do some mischief. She could not recover her cheerfulness when the rest of the exiles came, and rites went forward which made all but herself almost regardless of the storm.

They waited some time for Andreas; but as his sympathy was of the least possible consequence, they at length proceeded without him, supposing him too busy after his pelf to bestow any thought on the first marriage celebration which had, as far as they knew, taken place be-

tween Poles in these depths of the wilderness. It differed from the marriage celebrations of the people in the neighbourhood only in the addition of the oath which the parties were now met to take.

They had already been married in the usual manner, with the hearty good-will of the Russian superintendents, who were glad of all such symptoms among the exile crown peasants of a willingness to settle down in quiet, like those of their neighbours who had not been rebels. A dowry had even been offered with Sophia; but this was rejected. She could not have taken the oath if she had touched the Emperor's bounty with so much as her little finger.

This oath was merely a more solemn form of their common vow never to consider Siberia as their home, the Emperor as their sovereign, or any social obligations here entered into as interfering with the primary claims of their country. They and their children were, in short, never to acquiesce in the loss of their heritage, even though their banishment should extend to the thousandth generation. A new clause was added on the present occasion. The newly-married pair vowed never to rest till they had procured the release of Ernest from his ignominious lot, and his restoration to at least the degree of comparative freedom which he had sacrificed for them. This vow, spoken with a faltering voice, because in a nearly hopeless spirit, was drowned in the utterance; and the memory of Ernest was honoured in silence by his companions when

they had once given his name to the rushing winds.

The storm increased so much that it became dangerous to remain on the heights; and the rest of the observances were hastily gone through, in increasing darkness and tumult. A tremendous swell of the waters below caused most who were present to start back involuntarily, as if they feared to be swept away even from their high position. Sophia alone was undaunted,—not as she would have been a few months before, but because a new life, which bore no relation to external troubles and terrors, was now animating her heart and mind.

"Let us stay somewhere near till this has blown over," said she, leading the way to a little cave below, where they might be sheltered from the wind. "I should like, if it were only for Emilia's sake, that we should see these waters calm again before we go home. There is no harm in humouring her superstition, even supposing that none of us share it."

Taddeus and Lenore smiled at one another when they found Sophia the first to think of humouring superstition. They followed her, but, on arriving at the mouth of the cave, could obtain no entrance. It was choked up, the roof having fallen in. Clara apprehended the truth at once. Her father's zeal to grow rich enough to go to Tobolsk, in order to grow richer still, had prevented his going there at all. In this cave was the fossil treasure he had dishonestly concealed from his companions: and in his eager-

ness to extract his wealth from the mass in which it lay embedded, he had pulled down a weight upon his head which killed him. The body was afterwards found; but, if it had not been for regard to little Clara's feelings, it would probably have been left thus naturally buried; for a more appropriate grave could scarcely have been devised than that which he had prepared for himself.

"You shall live with us, Clara, and be our sister," said Sophia to the horror-stricken little girl. "Cyprian can never know how kind you were to me while he was away; but he shall learn to love you for it."

"She may go back to Poland, if she wishes it," observed Taddeus aside to his mother. "There is now nothing to keep her here; and the Emperor does not yet crusade against little girls, though he does against their mothers and brothers."

"She had better stay where she is," said Paul, also aside, "and if we all take pains with her, she will turn out a paragon of a wife. Your mother will teach her reasoning and patriotism, and all that, and Emilia will give her all her own accomplishments that it is not too late to begin with. She can never have such an eye and ear, but there is time yet to give her a very clever pair of hands: and then she may settle down as Cyprian and I have done."

"Cyprian and you!" exclaimed Taddeus. But recollecting that there would be no end of quarrels with Paul on this subject if once begun,

he restrained his anger at having Sophia compared with Emilia.

"You shall live with me, my dear, and be my daughter, as you have long called yourself," said Lenore: "and we will comfort one another till we can get back to Poland, if that day should ever come. There is much more comfort for some of us than there was, in the midst of all our misfortunes; and it is a comfort that I do not think we shall lose any more. Some may die, and others may leave us for some different kind of servitude; and it may even happen that none of us may see Warsaw again: but as long as we love one another and are patient, we cannot be quite miserable."

Emilia pointed to the west with a look of joy; and presently the clouds parted slowly, and let out the faint red glow of evening, which spread itself over the subsiding waters. Having hailed the omen, the party separated, some returning to their several homes, and some watching till the long twilight was wholly withdrawn. The spirit of optimism which lives in the hearts of patriots as in its natural home, was now no longer checked by the perpetual presence of a despairing sufferer; and not only this night, but from day to day, did the exiles cheer themselves with the conviction that tyranny cannot endure for ever; that their icy chain would at length be breathed upon, and their country's flag float once more. Such hope is at this moment sanctifying the shores of the Charmed Sea.

SUMMARY

Of the Principles illustrated in this Volume.

In exchanging commodities for one another directly, i. e. in the way of barter, much time is lost, and trouble incurred before the respective wants of the exchanging parties can be supplied.

This trouble and waste may be avoided by the adoption of a medium of exchange; that is, a commodity generally agreed upon, which, in order to effect an exchange between two other commodities, is first received in exchange for the one, and then given in exchange for the other.

This commodity is money.

The great requisites in a medium of exchange are, that it should be—

... what all sellers are willing to receive;
... capable of division into convenient portions;
... portable, from including great value in small bulk;
... indestructible, and little liable to fluctuations of value.

Gold and silver unite these requisites in an unequalled degree, and have also the desirable quality of beauty. Gold and silver have therefore formed the principal medium of exchange hitherto adopted: usually prepared, by an appointed authority, in the form most suitable for the purposes of exchange, in order to avoid the

inconvenience of ascertaining the value of the medium on every occasion of purchase.

Where the supply of money is left unrestricted, its exchangeable value will be ultimately determined, like that of all other commodities, by the cost of production.

Where the supply is restricted, its exchangeable value depends on the proportion of the demand to the supply.

In the former case, it retains its character of a commodity, serving as a standard of value in preference to other commodities only in virtue of its superior natural requisites to that object.

In the latter case, it ceases to be a commodity, and becomes a mere ticket of transference, or arbitrary sign of value: and then, the natural requisites above described become of comparatively little importance.

The quality by which money passes from hand to hand with little injury enables it to compensate inequalities of supply by the slackened or accelerated speed of its circulation.

The rate of circulation serves as an index of the state of supply; and therefore tends, where no restriction exists, to an adjustment of the supply to the demand.

Where restriction exists, the rate of circulation indicates the degree of derangement introduced among the elements of exchangeable value, but has no permanent influence in its rectification.

Clowes, Printer, Stamford-street.

BERKELEY THE BANKER.

PART I.

Chapter I.

THE HALEHAM PEOPLE.

"The affair is decided, I suppose," said Mrs. Berkeley to her husband, as he folded up the letter he had been reading aloud. "It is well that Horace's opinion is so boldly given, as we agreed to abide by it."

"Horace knows as much about my private affairs as I do myself, and a great deal more about the prospects of the banking business," replied Mr. Berkeley. "We cannot do better than take his advice. Depend upon it, the connexion will turn out a fine thing for my family, as Horace says. It is chiefly for your sakes, my dear girls."

"May I look again at Horace's letter?" asked Fanny, as her father paused to muse. "I did not understand that he thought it could be more than a safe, and probably advantageous, connexion. Ah! here it is.—'I like the prospect, as affording you the moderate occupation you seem to want, and perhaps enabling you to leave something more to my sisters than your former business yielded for them. Times were

never more prosperous for banking; and you can scarcely lose anything, however little you may gain, by a share in so small and safe a concern as the D—— bank.'"

Fanny looked at her father as she finished reading this, as much as to inquire where was the promise of fine things to arise out of the new partnership.

"Horace is very cautious, you know," observed Mr. Berkeley: "he always says less than he means—at least when he has to give advice to any of the present company; all of whom he considers so sanguine, that, I dare say, he often congratulates us on having such a son and brother as himself to take care of us."

"He yields his office to Melea only," observed Mrs. Berkeley, looking towards her younger daughter, who was reading the letter once more before giving her opinion. "Tell us, Melea, shall your father be a banker or still an idle gentleman?"

"Has he ever been an idle gentleman?" asked Melea. "Can he really want something to do when he has to hurry from one committee-room to another every morning, and to visit the workhouse here and the gaol at D——, and to serve on juries, and do a hundred things besides, that prevent his riding with Fanny and me oftener than once a month?"

"These are all very well, my dear," said her father; "but they are not enough for a man who was brought up to business, and who has been accustomed to it all his life. I would not,

at sixty five, connect myself with any concern which involved risk, or much labour; but I should like to double your little fortunes, when it may be done so easily, and the attempt can do no harm."

"I wish," said Fanny, "you would not make this a reason. Melea and I shall have enough; and if we had not, we should be sorry to possess more at the expense of your entering into business again, after yourself pronouncing that the time had come for retiring from it."

"Well, but, my dears, this will not be like my former business, now up and now down; so that one year I expected nothing less than to divide my plum between you, and the next to go to gaol. There will be none of these fluctuations in my new business."

"I am sure I hope not," said Fanny anxiously.

"Fanny remembers the days," said her mother, smiling, "when you used to come in to dinner too gloomy to speak while the servants were present, and with only one set of ideas when they were gone,—that your girls must make half their allowance do till they could get out as governesses."

"That was hardly so bad," observed Fanny, "as being told that we were to travel abroad next year, and have a town and country-house, and many fine things besides, that we did not care for half so much as for the peace and quiet we have had lately. Oh! father, why cannot we go on as we are?"

"We should not enjoy any more peace and

comfort, my dear, if we let slip such an opportunity as this of my benefiting my family. Another thing, which almost decided me before Horace's letter came," he continued, addressing his wife, "is, that Dixon's premises are let at last, and there is going to be a very fine business set on foot there by a man who brings a splendid capital, and will, no doubt, bank with us at D——. I should like to carry such a connexion with me; it would be a creditable beginning."

"So those dismal-looking granaries are to be opened again," said Melea; "and there will be some stir once more in the timber-yards. The place has looked very desolate all this year."

"We will go to the wharf to see the first lighter unloaded," said Fanny, laughing. "When I went by lately, there was not so much as a sparrow in any of the yards. The last pigeon picked up the last grain weeks ago."

"We may soon have pigeon-pies again as often as we like," observed Mr. Berkeley. "Cargoes of grain are on the way; and every little boy in Haleham will be putting his pigeon-loft in repair when the first lighter reaches the wharf. The little Cavendishes will keep pigeons too, I dare say."

"That is a pretty name," observed Mrs. Berkeley, who was a Frenchwoman, and very critical in respect of English names.

"Montague Cavendish, Esq. I hope, my dear, that such a name will dispose you favourably towards our new neighbour, and his wife, and all that belongs to him."

"Q yes; if there are not too many of them. I hope it is not one of your overgrown English families, that spoil the comfort of a dinner-table."

Mr. Berkeley shook his head, there being, at the least, if what he had heard was true, half-a-dozen each of Masters and Misses Cavendish; insomuch that serious doubts had arisen whether the dwelling-house on Dixon's premises could be made to accommodate so large a family. The master of the "Haleham Commercial, French, and Finishing Academy" was founding great hopes on this circumstance, foreseeing the possibility of his having four or five Masters Cavendish as boarders in his salubrious, domestic, and desirable establishment.

The schoolmaster was disappointed in full one-half of his expectations. Of the six Masters Cavendish, none were old enough to be removed from under their anxious mother's eye for more than a few hours in the day. The four elder ones, therefore, between four and nine years old, became day-scholars only; bearing with them, however, the promise, that if they were found duly to improve, their younger brethren would follow as soon as they became unmanageable by the "treasure" of a governess, Mrs. Cavendish's dear friend, Miss Egg, who had so kindly, as a special favour, left an inestimable situation to make nonpareils of all Mrs. Cavendish's tribe.

How these children were to be housed no one could imagine, till a happy guess was made by

the work-people who were employed in throwing three rooms into one, so as to make a splendid drawing-room. It was supposed that they were to be laid in rows on the rugs before the two fire-places, the boys at one end and the girls at the other. This conjecture was set aside, however, by the carpenters, who were presently employed in partitioning three little rooms into six tiny ones, with such admirable economy of light that every partition exactly divided the one window which each of these rooms contained. It was said that an opportunity of practising fraternal politeness was thus afforded, the young gentlemen being able to open and shut their sisters' window when they opened and shut their own, so that a drowsy little girl might turn in her crib, on a bright summer's morning, and see the sash rise as if by magic, and have the fresh air come to her without any trouble of her own in letting it in. It was at length calculated that by Miss Egg taking three of the babies to sleep beside her, and by putting an iron-bedstead into the knife-pantry for the servant boy, the household might be accommodated; though the schoolmaster went on thinking that the straightforward way would have been to send the elder boys to him, for the holidays and all; the builder advising an addition of three or four rooms at the back of the dwelling; and everybody else wondering at the disproportion of the drawing-room to the rest of the house.

When the total family appeared at Haleham Church, the Sunday after their arrival, the sub-

ject of wonder was changed. Every one now said that the housing the family was an easy question in comparison with that of housing their apparel. Where could drawers ever be found large enough for the full-buckramed fancy dresses of the young gentlemen, and the ample frocks, flounced trousers, huge muslin bonnets and staring rosettes of the little ladies, who walked up the aisle hand in hand, two abreast, tightly laced and pointing their toes prettily? Their father's costume had something of the appearance of a fancy dress, though it did not take up so much room. He was a very little man, with shoes and pantaloons of an agonizing tightness, and a coat so amply padded and collared as to convert the figure it belonged to into as strong a resemblance to the shape of a carrot as if he had been hunchbacked. A little white hat perched on the summit of a little black head, spoiled the unity of the design considerably; but in church this blemish disappeared, the hat being stuck under one arm to answer to the wife on the other side.

Mr. Berkeley, who was disposed to regard in a favourable light every one who caused an accession of prosperity to the little town of Haleham, would not listen to remarks on any disputable qualities of his new neighbours. He waited in some impatience the opportunity of learning with what bank this great merchant meant to open an account; and was in perpetual hopes that on the occasion of his next ride to D——, whither he went three times a week to

attend to his new business, he might be accompanied by Mr. Cavendish. These hopes were soon at an end.

Mr. Cavendish was going to open a bank at Haleham, to be managed chiefly by himself, but supported by some very rich people at a distance, who were glad to be sleeping partners in so fine a concern as this must be, in a district where a bank was much wanted, and in times when banking was the best business of any. Such was the report spread in Haleham, to the surprise of the Berkeleys, and the joy of many of the inhabitants of their little town. It was confirmed by the preparations soon begun for converting an empty house in a conspicuous situation into the requisite set of offices, the erection of the board in front with the words HALEHAM BANK, and the arrival of a clerk or two with strong boxes, and other apparatus new to the eyes of the townspeople. Mr. Cavendish bustled about between his wharf and the bank, feeling himself the most consequential man in the town; but he contrived to find a few moments for conversation with Mr. Berkeley, as often as he could catch him passing his premises on the way to D——. This kind of intercourse had become rather less agreeable to Mr. Berkeley of late; but as he had admitted it in the earliest days of their acquaintance, he could not well decline it now.

"I understand, my dear sir," said Mr. Cavendish, one day, crossing the street to walk by his neighbour's horse, "that you have but lately entered the D—— bank. It is a thousand

pities that the step was taken before I came; I should have been so happy to have offered you a partnership. So partial as we both are to the business, we should have agreed admirably, I have no doubt."

Mr. Berkeley bowed. His companion went on: "There would have been nothing to do, you see, but to step down a quarter of a mile, on fine days, just when you happened to be in the humour for business, instead of your having to toil backwards and forwards to D—— so often."

Mr. Berkeley laughed, and said that he never toiled. He went when it suited him to go, and stayed away when it did not.

"Aye, aye; that is all very well at this time of year; but we must not judge of how it will be in every season by what it is at Midsummer. When the days get damp and dark, and the roads miry, it becomes a very pleasant thing to have one's offices at hand."

"And a pleasanter still to stay by one's own fireside, which I shall do on damp days," coolly observed Mr. Berkeley.

"You have such a domestic solace in those sweet daughters of yours!" observed Mr. Cavendish: "to say nothing of your lady, whose charming mixture of foreign grace with true English maternity, as Miss Egg was saying yesterday, (there is no better judge than Miss Egg,) would constitute her a conspicuous ornament in a far more distinguished society than we can muster here."

Again Mr. Berkeley bowed. Again his companion went on.

"Talking of society,—I hope you will think we have an acquisition in our new rector. Perhaps you are not aware that Longe is a relation of my wife's,—a first cousin; and more nearly connected in friendship than in blood. An excellent fellow is Longe; and I am sure you ought to think so, for he admires your daughter excessively,—Miss Berkeley I mean;—though your little syren did beguile us so sweetly that first evening that Longe met you. He appreciates Miss Melea's music fully; but Miss Berkeley was, as I saw directly, the grand attraction."

"You have made Chapman your watchman, I find," said Mr. Berkeley. "I hope he will not sleep upon his post from having no sleep at present; but he is in such a state of delight at his good fortune, that I question whether he has closed his eyes since you gave him the appointment."

"Poor fellow! Poor fellow! It affords me great pleasure, I am sure, to be able to take him on my list. Yes; the moment he mentioned your recommendation, down went his name, without a single further question."

"I did not give him any authority to use my name," observed Mr. Berkeley. "He merely came to consult me whether he should apply; and I advised him to take his chance. Our pauper-labourers have taken his work from him, and obliged him to live upon his savings for a twelvemonth past, while, as I have strong reasons for suspecting, he has been more anxious than ever to accumulate. You have made him a very

happy man; but I must disclaim all share in the deed."

"Well, well: he took no improper liberty, I assure you. Far from it; but the mention of your name, you are aware, is quite sufficient in any case. But, as to sleeping on his post,—perhaps you will be kind enough to give him a hint. So serious a matter,—such an important charge——"

Mr. Berkeley protested he was only joking when he said that. Chapman would as soon think of setting the bank on fire as sleeping on watch.

"It is a misfortune to Longe," thought he, as he rode away from the man of consequence, "to be connected with these people. He is so far superior to them! A very intelligent, agreeable man, as it seems to me; but Fanny will never like him if he is patronized by the Cavendishes, be his merits what they may. He must be a man of discernment, distinguishing her as he does already: and if so, he can hardly be in such close alliance with these people as they pretend. It is only fair she should be convinced of that."

And the castle-building father bestowed almost all his thoughts for the next half-hour on the new rector, and scarcely any on the curate, who was an acquaintance of longer standing, and an object of much greater interest in the family.

This curate was at the moment engaged in turning over some new books on the counter of Enoch Pye, the Haleham bookseller. Mr. Craig was a privileged visiter in this shop, not only

because Enoch could not exist without religious ministrations, given and received, but because Enoch was a publisher of no mean consideration in his way, and it was a very desirable thing to have his own small stock of learning eked out by that of a clergyman, when he stumbled on any mysterious matters in works which he was about to issue. He put great faith in the little corps of humble authors with whom he was connected; but it did now and then happen that the moral of a story appeared to him not drawn out explicitly enough; that retribution was not dealt with sufficient force; and he was sometimes at a loss how to test the accuracy of a quotation. On this occasion, he would scarcely allow Mr. Craig to look even at the frontispieces of the new books on the counter, so eager was he for the curate's opinion as to what would be the effect of the establishment of the bank on the morals and condition of the people of Haleham.

"The effect may be decidedly good, if they choose to make it so," observed Mr. Craig. "All fair means of improving the temporal condition are, or ought to be, means for improving the moral state of the people; and nothing gives such an impulse to the prosperity of a place like this as the settlement in it of a new trading capitalist."

"Aye, sir; so we agreed when the brewery was set up, and when Bligh's crockery-shop was opened: but a bank, Sir, is to my mind a different kind of affair. A banker deals not in necessary meats or drinks, or in the vessels

which contain them, but in lucre,—altogether in lucre."

"By which he helps manufacturers and tradesmen to do their business more effectually and speedily than they otherwise could. A banker is a dealer in capital. He comes between the borrower and the lender. He borrows of one and lends to another——"

"But he takes out a part by the way," interrupted Enoch, with a knowing look. "He does not give out entire that which he receives, but abstracts a part for his own profit."

"Of course he must have a profit," replied Mr. Craig, "or he would not trouble himself to do business. But that his customers find their profit in it, too, is clear from their making use of him. They pay him each a little for a prodigious saving of time and trouble to all."

"Yes, yes," replied Enoch; "a man cannot have been in such a business as mine for so many years without knowing that banks are a great help in times of need; and I am willing to see and acknowledge the advantage that may accrue to myself from this new bank, when I have payments to make to a distance, and also from a great ease which, in another respect, I expect it to bring to my mind."

"I suppose you pay your distant authors by sending bank-notes by the post."

"Yes; and sometimes in bills: especially when there is an odd sum. There is risk and trouble in this, and some of my fair correspondents do not know what to do with bills when

they have got them. See, here is one actually sent back to me at the expiration of the three months, with a request that I will send the money in notes, as the young lady does not know any body in London whom she could ask to get it cashed for her."

"Henceforth she will be paid through the bank here and the bank nearest to her, instead of putting the temptation in your way to throw the bill into the fire, and escape the payment."

Enoch replied that he was thankful to say, it was no temptation to him; and Mr. Craig perceived that he was waiting to be questioned about the other respect in which the bank was to bring him ease of mind.

"Far be it from me," replied the bookseller, "to complain of any trouble which happens to me through the integrity for which it has pleased Providence to give me some small reputation; but I assure you, Sir, the sums of money that are left under my care, by commercial travellers, Sir, and others who go a little circuit, and do not wish to carry much cash about with them, are a great anxiety to me. They say the rest of the rich man is broken through care for his wealth. I assure you, Sir, that, though not a rich man, my rest is often broken through such care;—and all the more because the wealth is not my own."

"An honourable kind of trouble, Mr. Pye; and one of which you will be honourably relieved by the bank, where, of course, you will send your commercial friends henceforth to deposit their

money. There also they can make their inquiries as to the characters of your trading neighbours, when they are about to open new accounts. You have often told me what a delicate matter you feel it to pronounce in such cases. The bank will discharge this office for you henceforth."

Enoch replied shortly, that the new banker and his people could not know so much of the characters of the townsfolks as he who had lived among them for more than half a century; and Mr. Craig perceived that he did not wish to turn over to any body an office of whose difficulties he was often heard to complain.

"Do not you find great inconvenience in the deficiency of change?" asked the curate. "It seems to me that the time of servants and shopkeepers is terribly wasted in running about for change."

"It is, Sir. Sometimes when I want to use small notes, I have none but large ones; and when I want a 20*l.* note to send by post, I may wait three or four days before I can get such a thing. I can have what I want in two minutes now, by sending to the bank. After the fair, or the market day, too, I shall not be overburdened with silver as I have often been. They will give me gold or notes for it at the bank, to any amount."

"If there were no banks," observed Mr. Craig, "what a prodigious waste of time there would be in counting out large sums of money! A draft is written in the tenth part of the time that

is required to hunt up the means of paying a hundred pounds in guineas, shillings, and pence, or in such an uncertain supply of notes as we have in a little town like this. And, then, good and bad coin——"

"Aye, Sir. I reckon that in receiving my payments in the form of drafts upon a banker, I shall save several pounds a year that I have been obliged to throw away in bad coin or forged notes."

"And surely the townspeople generally will find their advantage in this respect, as well as yourself. But a greater benefit still to them may be the opportunity of depositing their money, be it much or little, where they may receive interest for it. Cavendish's bank allows interest on small deposits, does it not?"

"On the very smallest," replied Mr. Pye. "People are full of talk about his condescension in that matter. He even troubles himself to ask his work-people,—aye, his very maid-servants,—whether they have not a little money by them that they would like to have handsome interest for."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Craig, looking rather surprised. "And do they trust——do they accept the offer?"

"Accept it! aye, very thankfully. Who would not? There is Chapman that is appointed watchman: he had a few pounds of his savings left; and he put them into the bank to bear interest till Rhoda Martin's earnings shall come to the same sum; so that they may have something to furnish with."

"And where will she put her earnings?"

"Into the bank, of course. You know she has got the place of nursemaid at the Cavendishes; and she would not be so unhandsome, she says, as to put her money any where but into the same hands it came out of. So she began by depositing ten pounds left her as a legacy. It is quite the fashion now for our work-people to carry what they have, be it ever so little, to the bank; and Mr. Cavendish is very kind in his way of speaking to them."

"Well; you see here is another great advantage in the establishment of a bank, if it be a sound one. In my country, Scotland, the banks are particularly sound, so as to make it quite safe for the people to lodge their small deposits there, and society has the advantage of a quantity of money being put into circulation which would otherwise lie dead, as they call it,—that is, useless. Many millions of the money deposited in the Scotch banks are made up of the savings of labourers; and it would be a loss to the public, as well as to the owners, if all this lay by as useless as so many pebbles. I wish, however, that there were some places of deposit for yet smaller sums than the Scotch bankers will receive *. They will take no sum under 10*l*."

"If one man is kind-hearted enough to take the trouble of receiving such small sums," observed Enoch, "I think others might too. I was very wrong to hint any doubts about Mr.

* Savings-banks were not instituted when this was said: viz., in 1814.

Cavendish's trading in lucre, when it is so clear that he thinks only of doing good. I take shame to myself, Mr. Craig."

"At the same time, Mr. Pye, one would not be urgent with the people to trust any one person with all their money. In Scotland, there are a great many partners in a bank, which makes it very secure."

Enoch looked perplexed; and while he was still pondering what Mr. Craig might mean, his attention was engaged by a young woman who entered the shop, and appeared to have something to show him for which it was necessary to choose an advantageous light. Mr. Craig heard Enoch's first words to her, whispered across the counter,—"How's thy mother to-day, my dear?" and then he knew that the young woman must be Hester Parndon, and began again to look at the new books till Hester's business should be finished.

He was presently called to a consultation, as he had been once or twice before, when Mr. Pye and the young artist he employed to design his frontispieces could not agree in any matter of taste that might be in question.

"I wish you would ask Mr. Craig," observed Hester.

"So I would, my dear; but he does not know the story."

"The story tells itself in the drawing, I hope," replied Hester.

"Let me see," said the curate. "O yes! there is the horse galloping away, and the thrown

young lady lying on the ground. The children who frightened the horse with their waving boughs are clambering over the stile, to get out of sight as fast as possible. The lady's father is riding up at full speed, and her lover——"

"No, no; no lover," cried Enoch, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Mr. Pye will not print any stories about lovers," observed Hester, sorrowfully.

"It is against my principles, Sir, as in some sort a guardian of the youthful mind. This is the heroine's brother, Sir; and I have no fault to find with him. But the young lady,—she is very much hurt, you know. It seems to me, now, that she looks too much as if she was thinking about those children, instead of being resigned. Suppose she was to lie at full length, instead of being half raised, and to have her hands clasped, and her eyes cast upwards."

"But that would be just like the three last I have done," objected Hester. "The mother on her death-bed, and the sister when she heard of the sailor-boy's being drowned, and the blind beggar-woman,—you would have them all lying with their hands clasped and their eyes cast up, and all in black dresses, except the one in bed. Indeed they should not be all alike."

So Mr. Craig thought. Moreover, if the young lady was amiable, it seemed to him to be quite in character that she should be looking after the frightened children, with concern for them in her countenance. Enoch waxed obstinate on being opposed. He must have the riding habit

changed for a flowing black robe, and the whole attitude and expression of the figure altered to the pattern which possessed his imagination.

"What does your mother say to this drawing, Hester?" inquired Mr. Craig, when he saw the matter becoming desperate.

"She thinks it the best I have done; and she desired me to study variety above all things; and it is because it is so unlike all the rest that she likes it best."

Enoch took the drawing out of her hands at these words, to give the matter another consideration.

"Do persuade him," whispered Hester to the curate. "You do not know how people begin to laugh at his frontispieces for being all alike; all the ladies with tiny waists, and all the gentlemen with their heads turned half round on their shoulders. Do not be afraid. He is so deaf he will not know what we are saying."

"Indeed! I was not aware of that."

"No, because he is accustomed to your voice in church. He begins to say,—for he will not believe that he is deaf,—that you are the only person in Haleham that knows how to speak distinctly, except the fishwoman, and the crier, and my mother, who suits her way of speaking to his liking exactly. But, Sir, the people in London laughed sadly at the frontispiece to 'Faults acknowledged and amended.'"

"What people in London?"

"O! the people,—several people,—I know a good deal about the people in London, and they

understand about such things much better than we do."

"Then I wish that, instead of laughing at you for drawing as you are bid, they would employ you to design after your own taste. You are fit for a much higher employment than this, and I wish you had friends in London to procure it for you."

Hester blushed, and sparkled, and looked quite ready to communicate something, but refrained and turned away.

"I like this much better, the more I look at it, my dear," said Enoch, relieving himself of his best spectacles, and carefully locking up the drawing in his desk: "stay; do not go without your money. I shall make you a present over and above what we agreed upon; for, as your mother says, it is certainly your best piece. Now, I don't mean to guess what you are going to do with this money. There come times when girls have use for money. But if you should just be going to give it to your mother to lay by, I could let you have a guinea for that note and shilling. Guineas are scarce now-a-days; but I have one, and I know your mother is fond of keeping them. Will you take it for her?"

Hester was not going to put her money into her mother's hands. Into the new bank perhaps?—No, she was not going to lay it by at all. And she blushed more than ever, and left the shop.

Enoch sighed deeply, and then smiled dubiously, while he wondered what Mrs. Parndon

would do when her daughter married away from her to London, as she was just about to do. It was a sad pinch when her son Philip settled in London, though he had a fine goldsmith's business; but Hester was so much cleverer, so much more like herself, that her removal would be a greater loss still.

"Why should she not go to London too?" Mr. Craig inquired.

O no, Enoch protested; it was, he believed, he flattered himself, he had understood,—quite out of the question. He added, confidentially, that it might be a good thing for the new bank if she would lodge her money there, for she had a very pretty store of guineas laid by.

"Does she value them as gold,—I mean as being more valuable than bank-notes,—or as riches?" asked Mr. Craig. "If the one, she will rather keep them in her own hands. If the other, she will be glad of interest upon them."

"She began by being afraid that the war would empty the country of money; and now that less and less gold is to be seen every day, she values her guineas more than ever, and would not part with them, I believe, for any price. As often as she and I get together to talk of our young days, she complains of the flimsy rags that such men as Cavendish choose to call money. 'Put a note in the scale,' says she, 'and what does it weigh against a guinea? and if a spark flies upon it out of the candle, where is it?'—Many's the argument we have had upon this. I tell her that there is no real loss when a bank note is

burned, as there is if an idle sailor chucks a guinea into the sea."

"If a magpie should chance to steal away a five-pound note of yours," said the curate, "or if you should chance to let your pocket-book fall into the fire, you will have Mrs. Parndon coming to comfort you with assurances that there is no real loss."

"To me, there would be, Sir. I do not deny that. I mean that no actual wealth would be destroyed, because the bank note I hold only promises to pay so much gold, which is safe in somebody's hands, whether there be a fire or not. When gold is melted in a fire, it may be worth more or less (supposing it recovered) than it was worth as coin, according to the value of gold at the time. If the enemy captures it at sea, it is so much dead loss to our country, and so much clear gain to the enemy's. If a cargo of precious metals goes to the bottom, it is so much dead loss to everybody. So I tell Mrs. Parndon."

"As she is not likely to go to sea, I suppose she determines to keep her guineas, and guard against fire."

Enoch whispered that some folks said that fire would improve the value of her guineas very much, if she put them into a melting-pot. Guineas were now secretly selling for a pound note and four shillings; and there was no doubt that Philip, the goldsmith, would give his mother as much for hers: but she hoped they would grow dearer yet, and therefore still kept them by her.

The curate was amused at Enoch's tolerant way of speaking of Mrs. Parndon's love of lucre, while he was full of scrupulosity as to the moral lawfulness of Mr. Cavendish's occupation. The old man acknowledged, however, by degrees, that it could do the Haleham people no harm to have their time saved, their convenience and security of property promoted, their respectability guaranteed, their habits of economy encouraged, and their dead capital put in motion. All these important objects being secured by the institution of banking, when it is properly managed, prudent and honourable bankers are benefactors to society, no less, as Mr. Pye was brought to admit, than those who deal directly in what is eaten, drunk, and worn as apparel. The conversation ended, therefore, with mutual congratulations on the new bank, always supposing it to be well-managed, and Mr. Cavendish to be prudent and honourable.

Chapter II.

THE PRIDE OF HALEHAM.

Before the summer was much further advanced, a new interest arose to draw off some of the attention of the people of Haleham from the great Mr. Cavendish and the gay Mrs. Cavendish, and the whole tribe of charming Masters and Misses Cavendish. A favourite of longer standing was in everybody's thoughts for at

least three weeks. Hester's marriage was evidently at hand; and besides a wedding being a rare thing in Haleham, at least anything above a pauper wedding,—the Parndons were an old-established and respected family, and Hester in particular was looked upon as an ornament to the little town. Her father had been engaged in some public service in which his talents as a draughtsman had distinguished him, and which secured a small pension for his widow. As he found no capabilities in his son Philip which could serve as qualifications for assisting or succeeding him in his office, he bestowed his chief attention on his little girl, who early displayed a talent for drawing which delighted him. He died, however, before she had had time to make the most of his instructions; and she stopped short at the humble employment of designing frontispieces for Mr. Pye's new books. Her mother liked the arrangement, both because it enabled her to keep her daughter with her without preventing Hester from earning money, and because it afforded much occasion of intercourse with Mr. Pye, whom she liked to continue to see every day, if possible. Hester's townsmen were very proud of her achievements, as well as of her sprightliness and pretty looks.

Every one felt as if he had heard a piece of family news when it was told that the young man who had come down with Philip, the summer before, and had been supposed to be a cousin, was going to carry off Philip's sister. All were ready to believe it a very fine thing for Hester;

—so well-dressed and handsome as Edgar Morrison was,—such a good place as he had in the Mint,—and such an intimate friend of her brother's as he had long been. Hester was told twenty times a day that her friends were grieved to think of losing her, but that they would not be so selfish as not to rejoice in her engagement. No engagement ever went on more smoothly. Everybody approved; Edgar adored; Hester loved, confidently and entirely. There were no untoward delays. Just at the time fixed long before, Edgar came down to Haleham, and people said to one another after church, that as it was not probable he could be long spared from the Mint, the wedding would most likely be in the course of the week. On Tuesday, it got abroad that Philip was come; and as he had, no doubt, in virtue of his occupation, brought the ring, it was no sign that Thursday was not to be the day that John Rich had sold no plain gold rings for more than a month.

Thursday was indeed to be the day; and as it was found, on the Wednesday morning, that everybody knew this by some means or other, no further attempt was made to keep the secret. Hester's friends were permitted by her vain mother to understand that they might come and bid her farewell. Wednesday was the market-day at Haleham; and the present was a particularly busy market-day; that is, out of the twelve people who from time to time sold things in general on either side the main street, all were present, except a gardener whose pony was

lame, and a tinman, mop and brush-seller, whose wife had died. This unusually full attendance was caused by a notice that the new notes of Cavendish's bank would be issued this market-day. Some came to behold the sight of the issuing of notes, with the same kind of mysterious wonder with which they had gone to hear the lion roar at the last fair. Others expected to suit their convenience in taking a new sort of money; and most felt a degree of ambition to hold at least one of the smooth, glazed, crackling pieces of engraved paper that everybody was holding up to the light, and spelling over, and speculating upon. The talk was alternately of Edgar and Mr. Cavendish, of the mint and the bank, of Hester's wedding clothes and the new dress in which money appeared. A tidy butter- and fowl woman folded up her cash, and padlocked her baskets sooner than she would have done on any other day, in order to look in at Mrs. Parndon's, and beg Hester to accept her best bunch of moss-roses, and not to forget that it was in her farm-yard that she was first alarmed by a turkey-cock. A maltster, on whose premises Hester had played hide and seek with a lad, his only son, who had since been killed in the wars, hurried from the market to John Rich's, to choose a pretty locket, to be bestowed, with his blessing, on the bride; and others, who had less claim to an interview on this last day, ventured to seek a parting word, and were pleased to perceive every appearance of their being expected.

Mrs. Parndon, in her best black silk and afternoon cap, sat by her bright-rubbed table, ready to dispense the currant wine and seed-cake. Philip lolled out of the window to see who was coming. Edgar vibrated between the parlour and the staircase; for his beloved was supposed to be busy packing, and had to be called down and led in by her lover on the arrival of every new guest. It was so impossible to sit below, as if she expected everybody to come to do her homage! and Edgar looked so particularly graceful when he drew her arm under his own, and encouraged her to take cheerfully what her friends had to say!

"Here is somebody asking for you," said Edgar, mounting the stairs with less alacrity than usual. "She hopes to see you, but would be sorry to disturb you, if others did not; but she will not come in. She is standing in the court."

Hester looked over the muslin blind of the window, and immediately knew the farmer's wife who had let her try to milk a cow, when she could scarcely make her way alone through the farm-yard. Edgar was a little disappointed when he saw how she outstripped him in running down stairs, and seemed as eager to get her friend properly introduced into the parlour as if she had been Miss Berkeley herself.

"You must come in, Mrs. Smith; there is nobody here that you will mind seeing, and you look as if you wanted to sit down and rest."

"It is only the flutter of seeing you, Miss Hester. No; I cannot come in. I only brought

these few roses for you, and wished to see you once more, Miss Hester."

"Why do you begin calling me 'Miss?' I was never anything but Hester before."

"Well, to be sure," said Mrs. Smith, smiling, "it is rather strange to be beginning to call you 'Miss,' when this is the last day that anybody can call you so."

"I did not remember that when I found fault with you," said Hester, blushing. "But come in; your basket will be safe enough just within the door."

While Mrs. Smith was taking her wine, and Hester putting the moss-roses in water, the maltster came in, with his little packet of silver paper in his hand.

"Why, Mr. Williams! so you are in town! How kind of you to come and see us! I am sure Hester did not think to have bid you good bye, though she was speaking of you only the other day."

"None but friends, I see," said the laconic Mr. Williams, looking round: "so I will make bold without ceremony."

And he threw over Hester's neck the delicate white ribbon to which the locket was fastened, and whispered that he would send her some hair to put into it: she knew whose; and he had never, he could tell her, given a single hair of it away to anybody before. Hester looked up at him with tearful eyes, without speaking.

"Now you must give me something in return," said he. "If you have the least bit of a

drawing that you do not care for——You know I have the second you ever did; your mother keeping the first, as is proper. I have the squirrel, you remember, with the nut in its paw. The tail, to be sure, is more like a feather than a tail; but it was a wonderful drawing for a child."

"Shall I do a drawing for you when I am settled?" said Hester, "or will you have one of the poor things out of my portfolio? I have parted with all the good ones, I am afraid."

"You will have other things to think of when you get to London than doing drawings for me, my dear. No; any little scratch you like to part with,—only so that it has been done lately."

While Hester was gone for her portfolio, Philip took up the silver paper which was lying on the table, and began to compare it with the paper of one of the new notes, holding both up to the light.

"Some people would say," observed Edgar to him, "that you are trying to find out whether it would be easy to forge such a note as that."

"People would say what is very foolish then," replied Philip. "If I put my neck in danger with making money, it should be with coining, not forging. We shall soon have notes as plentiful as blackberries, if new banks are set up every day. Golden guineas are the rare things now; and the cleverest cheats are those that melt every guinea they can lay their hands on, and send out a bad one instead of it."

"But it is so much easier to forge than to coin," remarked Edgar: "except that, to be

sure, people seem to have no use of their eyes where money is concerned. You never saw such ridiculous guineas as our people bring to the Mint sometimes, to show how easily the public can be taken in."

"Everybody is not so knowing as you and I are made by our occupations," observed Philip. "But a man who wishes to deal in false money may choose, I have heard, between coining, and forging; for both are done by gangs, and seldom or never by one person alone. He may either be regularly taught the business, or make his share of the profits by doing what I think the dirtiest part of the work,—passing the bad money."

"Don't talk any more about it, Philip," said his mother. "It is all dirty work, and wicked work, and such as we people in the country do not like to hear of. Prices are higher than ever to-day, I understand, Mrs. Smith."

"If they are, ma'am," replied the simple Mrs. Smith, "there is more money than ever to pay them. I never saw so much money passing round as to-day, owing to the new notes, ma'am."

"I am sure it is very well," observed the widow, sighing. "It makes mothers anxious to have their children marrying in times like these, when prices are so high. Edgar can tell you how long it was before I could bring myself to think it prudent for these young folks to settle. I would have had them wait till the war was over, and living was cheaper."

"We should make sure first, ma'am," said

Edgar, "that the high prices are caused mainly by the war. The wisest people think that they are owing to the number of new banks, and the quantity of paper money that is abroad."

"How should that be?" inquired the widow. "The dearer everything is, you know, the more money is wanted. So let the bankers put out as many notes as they can make it convenient to give us, say I."

"But ma'am," pursued Edgar, "the more notes are put out, the faster the guineas go away. I assure you, Sir," he continued, addressing himself to Mr. Williams, "we go on working at the Mint, sending out coin as fast as ever we can prepare it, and nobody seems the better for it. Nobody can tell where it goes, or what becomes of it."

"Perhaps our friend Philip could tell something, if he chose," observed Mr. Williams; "such dealings as he has in gold. And perhaps, if you servants of the Mint could see into people's doings, you might find that you coin the same gold many times over."

"One of our officers said so the other day. He believes that our handsome new coin goes straight to the melting-pot, and is then carried in bars or bullion to the Bank of England, and then comes under our presses again, and so on. But much of it must go abroad too, we think."

"And some, I have no doubt, is hoarded; as is usually the case during war," observed Mr. Williams; whereupon the widow turned her head quickly to hear what was passing. "But what

waste it is to be spending money continually in coining, when every week uncoins what was coined the week before!"

"Waste indeed!" observed the widow. "But if it has anything to do with high prices, I suppose you do not object to it, Mr. Williams, any more than Mrs. Smith; for the high prices must be a great gain to you both."

"You must remember, Mrs. Parndon, we have to buy as well as sell; and so far we feel the high prices like other people. Mrs. Smith gets more than she did for her butter and her fowls; and even her roses sell a half-penny a bunch dearer than they did: but she has to buy coals for her house, and shirting for her husband; and for these she pays a raised price."

"Those are the worst off," replied Mrs. Parndon, sighing, "who have everything to buy and nothing to sell. I assure you, sir, my pension does not go so far by one-fourth part as it did when I first had it. And this was the thing that made me so anxious about these young people. Edgar has a salary, you know; and that is the same thing as a pension or annuity, when prices rise."

"True. Those are best off just now who sell their labour at an unfixed price, which rises with the price of other things. But for your comfort, ma'am, prices will be sure to fall some day; and then you will like your own pension and your son-in-law's salary as well as ever."

"And then," said Edgar, "you and Mrs. Smith will be reducing the wages of your ser-

vants and labourers, and will buy your blankets and fuel cheaper, and yet find yourselves growing poorer because your profits are lessened. Then," he continued, as Hester came into the room, "you will leave off giving lockets to your young friends when they marry."

"I shall never have such another young friend to give one to,—never one that I shall care for so much," replied Mr. Williams, who found himself obliged to rub his spectacles frequently before he could see to choose between the three or four drawings that Hester spread before him.

When the pathos of the scene became deeper; when Mr. Williams could no longer pretend to be still selecting a drawing; when Hester gave over all attempts to conceal her tears, when her lover lavished his endeavours to soothe and support her, and Mrs. Smith looked about anxiously for some way of escape, without undergoing the agony of a farewell, Philip, who seemed to have neither eyes, ears, nor understanding for sentiment, turned round abruptly upon the tender-hearted market-woman, with——

"Do you happen to have one of the new notes about you, Mrs. Smith? I want to see if this mark,—here in the corner, you see,—is an accident, or whether it may be a private mark."

"Mercy! Mr. Philip. I beg pardon, sir, for being startled. Yes, I have one somewhere." And with trembling hands she felt for her pocket-book. "Let's just go out quietly, Mr. Philip. She won't see me go, and I would not pain her any more, just for the sake of another look and

word. I shall find the note presently when we are in the court, Sir."

Philip looked on stupidly when he saw his sister's tears, and undecidedly, when Mrs. Smith was stealing out of the room. At last, he bethought himself of saying,

"I say, Hester—would you like to bid Mrs. Smith good bye or not? You need not unless you like, she says."

Hester turned from the one old friend to the other; and now the matter-of-fact Philip was glad to shorten the scene, and let Mrs. Smith go away without putting her in mind of the note. As he had a great wish to see as many notes and as few scenes as possible, he left home, and sauntered into the market, where he found people who had not yet set their faces homewards, and who were willing to chat with him, while packing up their unsold goods.

Mrs. Parndon's chief concern this day, except her daughter, had been Mr. Pye. She wondered from hour to hour, first, whether he would come, and afterwards, why he did not come. She concluded that he would use the privilege of an old friend, and drop in late in the evening, to give his blessing. She had been several times on the point of proposing that he should be invited to attend the wedding; but scruples which she did not acknowledge to herself, kept her from speaking. She liked the appearance of intimacy which must arise out of his being the only guest on such an occasion; but behind this there was a feeling that the sight of a daughter of hers at

the altar might convey an idea that she was herself too old to stand there with any propriety: an idea which she was very desirous should not enter Enoch's mind, as she was far from entertaining it herself. As it was pretty certain, however, that Mr. Pye would be present, she settled that it would be well for her to be at his elbow to modify his associations, as far as might be practicable; and she suggested, when the evening drew on, that, as poor Mr. Pye (who was certainly growing deaf, however unwilling he might be to own it) could hear the service but poorly from a distance, and as his interest in Hester was really like that of a father, he should be invited to breakfast with the family, and accompany them to church. Everybody being willing, the request was carried by Philip, and graciously accepted.

By noon the next day, when the post-chaise had driven off with the new-married pair from the widow Parndon's door, there was no such important personage in Haleham as Mr. Pye. He was the only one from whom the lonely mother would receive consolation; and when he was obliged to commend her to her son's care, and go home to attend his counter, he was accosted on the way by everybody he met. It was plain, at a glance, by his glossy brown coat, best white stockings, and Sunday wig, pushed aside from his best ear in his readiness to be questioned, that he had been a wedding guest; and many times, within a few hours, did he tell the story of what a devoted lover Edgar was,

and what a happy prospect lay before Hester, both as to worldly matters and the province of the heart; and how she was nearly sinking at the altar; and how he could not help her because her mother needed the support of his arm; and what a beautiful tray of flowers, with presents hidden beneath them, had been sent in by the Miss Berkeleys, just when the party were growing nervous as church-time approached; and how Mr. Cavendish had taken his hat quite off, bowing to the bride on her way home; and how finely Mr. Craig had gone through the service; and how——but Enoch's voice failed him as often as he came to the description of the chaise driving up, and Philip's superintendence of the fastening on the luggage. He could get no further; and his listeners departed, one after another, with sympathizing sighs. When was there ever a wedding-day without sighs?

Chapter III.

THE HALEHAM RIOT.

Haleham had never been apparently so prosperous as at this time, notwithstanding the war, to which were referred all the grievances of complainers,—and they were few. Prices were certainly very high; much higher since Mr. Berkeley had joined the D——— Bank, and Mr. Ca-

vendish opened the Haleham concern; but money abounded, taxation was less felt than when purses were emptier; and the hope of obtaining high prices stimulated industry, and caused capital to be laid out to the best advantage. At first, the same quantity of coin that there had been before circulated together with Cavendish's notes; and as there was nearly twice the quantity of money in the hands of a certain number of people to exchange for the same quantity of commodities, money was of course very cheap; that is, commodities were very dear. As gold money was prevented by law from becoming cheap, like paper money, people very naturally hoarded it, or changed it away to foreign countries, where commodities were not dear, as in England. Even in the little town of Haleham, it was soon discovered that several kinds of foreign goods could be had in greater variety and abundance than formerly; Haleham having its share of the larger quantity of foreign commodities now flowing into England in return for the guineas which left it as fast as they could be smuggled out of the country in their own shape, or as bullion. If the quantity of money had now been let alone, prices would have returned to their former state as soon as the additional quantity of money had been thus drained away: but, as fast as it disappeared, more bankers' notes were issued; so that the whole amount of money went on increasing, though the metal part of it lessened day by day. The great bank of all,—the Bank of England,—had obtained leave, some years

before, to put out notes without being liable to be called upon to exchange them for gold upon the demand of the holder of the note. The Bank was now making use of this permission at a great rate; and for two years past had put out so large a number of notes, that some people began to doubt whether it could keep its "promise to pay" in gold, whenever the time should come for parliament to withdraw its permission; which, it was declared, would be soon after the war should be ended. No other banks had the same liberty. They were not allowed to make their purchases with promises to pay, and then authorized to refuse to pay till parliament should oblige them to do so at the conclusion of the war. But the more paper money the Bank of England issued, the more were the proprietors of other banks tempted to put out as many notes as they dared, and thus to extend their business as much as possible; and many were rather careless as to whether they should be able to keep their "promise to pay;" and some cheats and swindlers set up banks, knowing that they should never be able to pay, and that their business must break in a very short time; but hoping to make something by the concern meanwhile, and to run off at last with some of the deposits placed in their hands by credulous people. So many kinds of bankers being eager at the same time to issue their notes, money of course abounded more and more; and, as commodities did not abound in the same proportion, they became continually dearer.

There would have been little harm in this, if all buyers had felt the change alike. But as they did not, there was discontent,—and very reasonable discontent,—in various quarters; while in others, certain persons were unexpectedly and undeservedly enriched at the expense of the discontented. If it had been universally agreed throughout the whole kingdom that everybody should receive twice as much money as he did before, and that, at the same time, whatever had cost a guinea should now cost two pound notes and two shillings, and that whatever had cost sixpence should now cost a shilling, and so on, nobody would have had to complain of anything but the inconvenience of changing the prices of all things. But such an agreement was not, and could not be, made; and that the quantity of money should be doubled and not equally shared, while prices were doubled to everybody, was sure to be called, what it really was, very unfair. The government complained that the taxes were paid in the same number of pounds, shillings, and pence as before, while government had to pay the new prices for whatever it bought. There was, in fact, a reduction of taxation: but, before the people had the satisfaction of perceiving and acknowledging this, the government was obliged to lay on new taxes to make up for the reduction of the old ones, and to enable it to carry on the war. This set the people complaining again; so that the government and nation were actually complaining at the same time, the one of a reduction, the other of an increase of taxation; and both had reason for their murmurs.

None had so much reason for discontent as those classes which suffered in both ways,—those who received fixed incomes. To pay the new prices with the old amount of yearly money, and to be at the same time heavily taxed, was indeed a great hardship; and the inferior clergy, fund-holders, salaried clerks, annuitants and others, were as melancholy as farmers were cheerful in regarding their prospects. Servants and labourers contrived by degrees to have their wages, and professional men their fees, raised: but these were evil days for those whose incomes were not the reward of immediate labour, and could not therefore rise and fall with the comparative expense of subsistence. In proportion as these classes suffered, the productive classes enjoyed; and the farmers under long leases had as much more than their due share as the landlord, the public servant, and creditor, had less.

This inequality led to some curious modes of management, whereby some endeavoured to recover their rights, and others to make the most of their present advantages; and in Haleham, as in more important places where the state of the currency had been affected by the establishment of a bank, or by some other inlet of a flood of paper money, instances were witnessed of a struggle between those who were benefited and those who were injured by the new state of money affairs.

"You complain of my never having time to ride with you, Melea," said Mr. Berkeley to his younger daughter, one fine October morning.

"I am not going to D——— to-day, and we will ride to Merton Downs, if you can prevail upon yourself to lay aside your German Dictionary for three hours."

Melea joyfully closed her book.

"Nay, I give you another hour. I must go down to the workhouse, and see the paupers paid off; but that will not take long."

"Then, suppose you meet us at Martin's farm," said Fanny. "It is on your way, and will save you the trouble of coming home again. Melea and I have not been at the Martins' this long while; and we want to know how Rhoda likes her place."

"Not for a long while indeed," observed their mother, as the girls left the room to prepare for their ride. "It is so far a bad thing for the Martins that Mr. Craig lodges there, that we cannot go and see them so often as we should like. It is only when he is absent for days together, as he is now, that the girls can look in at the farm as they used to do."

"The Martins do not want anything that we can do for them, my dear. They are very flourishing; and, I am afraid, will soon grow too proud to have a daughter out at service. Did not I hear somebody say that Rhoda is growing discontented already?"

"Yes; but there may be reason for it."

"All pride, depend upon it, my dear. Her father holds a long lease, and he may gather a pretty dower for his daughter out of his profits, before prices fall. I wish Craig would take a

fancy to the daughter and dower together, if it would prevent his running after my girls in the way he does. I shall forbid him the house soon, if I find he puts any fancies into their heads, as I am afraid he does, to judge by this prodigious passion for German."

"Mr. Craig and Rhoda Martin!" exclaimed Mrs. Berkeley, laughing. "That is a new idea to me. However, Rhoda is engaged to Chapman, you know."

"True; I forgot. Well; we must mate Craig elsewhere; for it would be intolerable for him to think of one of my daughters. Miss Egg might do. Mrs. Cavendish speaks very highly of her. Cannot you put it into his head? You remember how well the Cavendishes speak of her."

"No danger of my forgetting;—nor of Mr. Craig's forgetting it, either. You should see him take off the two ladies in an ecstacy of friendship. Nay, it is fair; very fair, if anybody is to be laughed at; and you will hardly pretend to any extra morality on that point."

"Well; only let Craig keep out of Fanny's way, that's all: but I am afraid Mr. Longe is too open,—too precipitate——"

"Fanny!" exclaimed Mrs. Berkeley, "I do not think Henry has any thoughts of her."

"Henry!" repeated Mr. Berkeley, impatiently. "The young man grows familiar at a great rate, I think. So you think it is Melea. Well; that is not quite so bad, as it leaves more time,—more chance of preferment before him. But I wish

he had it to-morrow, so that it might prevent our seeing any more of him."

"I am very sorry——" Mrs. Berkeley began, when her daughters appeared, and it was necessary to change the subject. After leaving orders that the horses should be brought down to Martin's farm in an hour, the young ladies accompanied their father as far as Sloe Lane, down which they turned to go to the farm, while he pursued his way to the workhouse.

A shrill voice within doors was silenced by Fanny's second tap at the door. The first had not been heard. After a hasty peep through the window, Rhoda appeared on the threshold to invite the young ladies in. Her colour was raised, and her eyes sparkled; which it gave Fanny great concern to see; for no one was present, but Mr. and Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Cavendish's baby, which the latter was dandling; and Rhoda had never been the kind of girl who could be suspected of quarrelling with her parents. Mrs. Martin seemed to guess what was in Fanny's mind, for she restored the baby to the young nursemaid's arms, bade her go and call the other children in from the garden, as it was time they should be going home, and then pointed to some curious matters which lay upon the table. These were fragments of very dark brown bread, whose hue was extensively variegated with green mould. Melea turned away in disgust, after a single glance.

"Miss Melea has no particular appetite for

such bread," observed Mrs. Martin. "Ladies, this is the food Mrs. Cavendish provides for her servants,—aye, and for the children too, as long as they will eat it. The grand Mrs. Cavendish, ladies; the great banker's lady."

"There must be some mistake," said Fanny, quietly. "It may happen——"

"There lies the bread, Miss Berkeley; and my husband and I saw Rhoda take it out of her pocket. Where else she could get such bread, perhaps you can tell us, ma'am."

"I do not mean to tax Rhoda with falsehood. I mean that it is very possible that, by bad management, a loaf or two may have been kept too long——"

"But just look at the original quality, ma'am." And the farmer and his wife spoke alternately.

"You should see the red herrings they dine off five days in the week."

"And the bone pies the other two."

"Sacks of bad potatoes are bought for the servants."

"The nursemaid and baby sleep underground, with a brick floor."

"The maids are to have no fire after the dinner is cooked in winter, any more than in summer."

"The errand-boy that was found lying sick in the street, and flogged for being drunk, ma'am, had had not so much as half a pint of warm beer, that his mother herself gave him to cheer him; but his stomach was weak, poor fellow, from having had only a hard dumpling all day, and the beer got into his head. Rhoda can testify to it all."

Fanny was repeatedly going to urge that it was very common to hear such things, and find them exaggerated; that Rhoda was high-spirited, and had been used to the good living of a farm-house; and, as an only daughter, might be a little fanciful: but proof followed upon proof, story upon story, till she found it better to endeavour to change the subject.

"If it was such a common instance of a bad place as one hears of every day," observed Martin, "I, for one, should say less about it. But here is a man who comes and gets every body's money into his hands, and puts out his own notes instead, in such a quantity as to raise the price of everything; and then he makes a pretence of these high prices, caused by himself, to starve his dependents; the very children of those whose money he holds."

"He cannot hold it for a day after they choose to call for it."

"Certainly, ma'am. But a bank is an advantage people do not like to give up. Just look, now, at the round of Cavendish's dealings. He buys corn—of me, we will say—paying me in his own notes. After keeping it in his granaries till more of his notes are out, and prices have risen yet higher, he changes it away for an estate, which he settles on his wife. Meantime, while the good wheat is actually before Rhoda's eyes, he says, 'bread is getting so dear, we can only afford what we give you. We do not buy white bread for servants.' And Rhoda must take out of his hands some of the wages she lodged there to buy white bread, if she must have it."

Fanny had some few things to object to this statement; for instance, that Cavendish could not float paper money altogether at random; and that there must be security existing before he could obtain the estate to bestow upon his wife: but the Martins were too full of their own ideas to allow her time to speak.

"They are all alike,—the whole clan of them," cried Mrs. Martin: "the clergyman no better than the banker. One might know Mr. Longe for a cousin; and I will say it, though he is our rector."

Fanny could not conceal from herself that she had no objection to hear Mr. Longe found fault with; and she only wished for her father's presence at such times.

"It has always been the custom, as long as I can remember, and my father before me," observed Martin, "for the rector to take his tithes in money. The agreement with the clergyman has been made from year to year as regularly as the rent was paid to the landlord. But now, here is Mr. Longe insisting on having his tithe in kind."

"In kind! and what will he do with it?"

"It will take him half the year to dispose of his fruits," observed Melea, laughing. "Fancy him, in the spring, with half a calf, and three dozen cabbages, and four goslings, and a sucking pig. And then will come a cock of hay; and afterwards so much barley, and so much wheat and oats; and then a sack of apples, and three score of turnips, and pork, double as much as his household can eat. I hope he will increase his house-

keeper's wages out of his own profits; for it seems to me that the trouble must fall on her. Yes, yes; the housekeeper and the errand-man should share the new profits between them."

"It is for no such purpose, Miss Melea, that he takes up this new fancy. He has no thought of letting any body but himself profit by the change of prices. As for the trouble you speak of, he likes the fiddle-faddle of going about selling his commodities. His cousin, Mrs. Cavendish, will take his pigs, and some of his veal and pork, and cabbages and apples: and he will make his servants live off potatoes and gruel, if there should be more oats and potatoes than he knows what to do with."

"Let him have as much as he may, he will never send so much as an apple to our lodger," observed Mrs. Martin. "He never considers Mr. Craig in any way. If you were to propose raising Mr. Craig's salary, or, what comes to the same thing, paying it in something else than money, he would defy you to prove that he was bound to pay it in any other way than as it was paid four years ago."

"And it could not be proved, I suppose," said Melea. "Neither can you prove that he may not take his tithe in kind."

"I wish we could," observed Martin, "and I would thwart him, you may depend upon it. Nothing shall he have from me but what the letter of the law obliges me to give him. But what an unfair state of things it is, ladies, when your rector may have double the tithe property

one year that he had the year before, while he pays his curate, in fact, just half what he agreed to pay at the beginning of the contract!"

While Melea looked even more indignant than Martin himself, her sister observed that the farmer was not the person to complain of the increased value of tithes, since he profited by precisely the same augmentation of the value of produce. The case of the curate she thought a very hard one; and that equity required an increase of his nominal salary, in proportion as its value became depreciated. She wished to know, however, whether it had ever entered the farmer's head to offer his landlord more rent in consequence of the rise of prices. If it was unfair that the curate should suffer by the depreciation in the value of money, it was equally unfair in the landlord's case.

Martin looked somewhat at a loss for an answer, till his wife supplied him with one. Besides that it would be time enough, she observed, to pay more rent when it was asked for, at the expiration of the lease, it ought to be considered that money was in better hands when the farmer had it to lay out in improving the land and raising more produce, than when the landlord had it to spend fruitlessly. Martin caught at the idea, and went on with eagerness to show how great a benefit it was to society that more beeves should be bred, and more wheat grown in consequence of fewer liveried servants being kept, and fewer journeys to the lakes being made by the landlord.

Fanny shook her head, and said that this had

nothing to do with the original contract between landlord and tenant. Leases were not drawn out with any view to the mode in which the respective parties should spend their money. The point now in question was, whether an agreement should be kept to the letter when new circumstances had caused a violation of its spirit; or whether the party profiting by these new circumstances should not in equity surrender a part of the advantage which the law would permit him to hold. The farmer was not at all pleased to find himself placed on the same side of the question with Mr. Longe, and his favourite Mr. Craig, whose rights he had been so fond of pleading, holding the same ground with Martin's own landlord.

The argument ended in an agreement that any change like that which had taken place within two years,—any action on the currency,—was a very injurious thing;—not only because it robs some while enriching others, but because it impairs the security of property,—the first bond of the social state.

Just then, Rhoda and the children burst in from the garden, saying that there must be something the matter in the town; for they had heard two or three shouts, and a scream; and, on looking over the hedge, had seen several men hurrying past, who had evidently left their work in the fields on some alarm. Martin snatched his hat and ran out, leaving the young ladies in a state of considerable anxiety. As the farmer had not said when he should come back, and his

wife was sure he would stay to see the last of any disaster before he would think of returning home, the girls resolved to walk a little way down the road, and gather such tidings as they could. They had not proceeded more than a furlong from the farm gate before they met their father's groom, with their own two horses and a message from his master. Mr. Berkeley begged his daughters to proceed on their ride without him, as he was detained by a riot at the workhouse. He begged the young ladies not to be at all uneasy, as the disturbance was already put down, and it was only his duty as a magistrate which detained him. The groom could tell nothing of the matter, further than that the outdoor paupers had begun the mischief, which presently spread within the workhouse. Some windows had been broken, he believed, but he had not heard of any one being hurt.

"You have no particular wish to ride, Melea, have you?" inquired her sister.

"Not at all. I had much rather see these children home. They look so frightened, I hardly know how Rhoda can manage to take care of them all."

"The horses can be left at the farm for half an hour while George goes with us all to Mr. Cavendish's," observed Fanny: and so it was arranged.

As the party chose a circuitous way, in order to avoid the bustle of the town, the young ladies had an opportunity of improving their acquaintance with five little Miss Cavendishes, including

the baby in arms. At first, the girls would walk only two and two, hand in hand, bolt upright, and answering only "Yes, ma'am," "No, ma'am," to whatever was said to them. By dint of perseverance, however, Melea separated them when fairly in the fields, and made them jump from the stiles, and come to her to have flowers stuck in their bonnets. This latter device first loosened their tongues.

"Mamma says it stains our bonnets to have flowers put into them," observed Marianna, hesitating. "She says we shall have artificial flowers when we grow bigger."

Melea was going to take out the garland, when Emma insisted that mamma did not mean these bonnets, but their best bonnets.

"O, Miss Berkeley!" they all cried at once, "have you seen our best bonnets?"

"With lilac linings," added one.

"With muslin rosettes," said another.

"And Emma's is trimmed round the edge, because she is the oldest," observed little Julia, repiningly.

"And mamma will not let Julia have ribbon strings till she leaves off sucking them at church," informed Marianna.

"That is not worse than scraping up the sand to powder the old men's wigs in the aisle," retorted Julia; "and Marianna was punished for that, last Sunday."

"We do not wish to hear about that," said Fanny. "See how we frightened that pheasant on the other side the hedge, just with pulling a hazel bough!"

As soon as the pheasant had been watched out of sight, Emma came and nestled herself close to Melea to whisper,

"Is not it ill-natured of Rhoda? I saw her mother give her a nice large harvest cake, and she will not let us have a bit of it."

"Are you hungry?"

"Why,—yes; I think I am beginning to be very hungry."

"You cannot be hungry," said Emma. "You had a fine slice of bread and honey just before Miss Berkeley came in. But Rhoda might as well give us some of her cake. I know she will eat it all up herself."

"I do not think she will; and, if I were you, I would not ask her for any, but leave her to give it to whom she likes; particularly as her mother was so kind as to give you some bread and honey."

"But we wanted that. Mamma said we need not have any luncheon before we came out, because Mrs. Martin always gives us something to eat. I was so hungry!"

"If you were hungry, what must Marianna have been? Do you know, Miss Berkeley, Marianna would not take her breakfast. She told a fib yesterday, and mamma says she shall not have any sugar in her tea for three months; and she would not touch a bit this morning. Miss Egg says she will soon grow tired of punishing herself this way; and that it is quite time to break her spirit."

Marianna overheard this last speech, and added triumphantly,

"Tom is not to have any sugar, any more than I, Miss Berkeley: and he was shut up half yesterday too. He brought in his kite all wet and draggled from the pond; and what did he do but take it to the drawing-room fire to dry, before the company came. It dripped upon our beautiful new fire-irons, and they are all rusted wherever the tail touched them."

"The best of it was," interrupted Emma, "the kite caught fire at last, and Tom threw it down into the hearth because it burned his hand; and the smoke made such a figure of the new chimney piece as you never saw, for it was a very large kite."

"So poor Tom lost his kite by his carelessness. Was his hand much burned?"

"Yes, a good deal: but Rhoda scraped some potato to put upon it."

"You will help him to make a new kite, I suppose?"

"I don't know how," replied one, carelessly.

"I shan't," cried another. "He threw my old doll into the pond."

"Miss Egg said that was the best place for it," observed Emma; "but she said so because Tom was a favourite that day." And the little girl told in a whisper why Tom was a favourite. He had promised to come up to the school-room and tell Miss Egg whenever Mr. Longe was in the parlour, though his mamma had expressly desired him not. But this was a great secret.

"How shall we stop these poor little creatures' tongues?" asked Melea. "There is no interesting them in any thing but what happens at home."

"I am very sorry we have heard so much of that, indeed," replied Fanny. "I do not see what you can do but run races with them, which your habit renders rather inconvenient."

The few poor persons they met on the outskirts of the town afforded occasion for the display of as much insolence on the part of the little Cavendishes as they had before exhibited of unkindness to each other. The Miss Berkeleys had no intention of paying a visit to Mrs. Cavendish, but were discerned from a window while taking leave of their charge, and receiving Rhoda's thanks outside the gate; and once having brought Mrs. Cavendish out, there was no retreat.—They must come in and rest. Mr. Cavendish was gone to learn what was the matter, and they really must stay and hear it. She could not trust them back again unless one of the gentlemen went with them. Terrible disorders indeed, she had heard: the magistrates threatened,—and Mr. Berkeley a magistrate! Had they heard that the magistrates had been threatened?

Melea believed that this was the case once a week at the least. But what else had happened?

O! they must come in and hear. There was a friend within who could tell all about it. And Mrs. Cavendish tripped before them into the drawing-room, where sat Miss Egg and Mr. Longe.

The one looked mortified, the other delighted. As Mr. Longe's great vexation was that he could never contrive to make himself of consequence with Fanny, it was a fine thing to have the matter of the conversation completely in his own power to-day. Fanny could not help being anxious about her father, and from Mr. Longe alone could she hear anything about him; and the gentleman made the most of such an opportunity of fixing her attention. He would have gained far more favour by going straight to the point, and telling exactly what she wanted to know; but he amplified, described, commented, and even moralized before he arrived at the proof that Mr. Berkeley was not, and had not been, in any kind of danger.—When this was once out, Mr. Longe's time of privilege was over, and it was evident that he was not listened to on his own account. Then did Miss Egg quit her task of entertaining Melea, and listen to Mr. Longe more earnestly than ever.

"I am so glad to see you two draw together so pleasantly," said Mrs. Cavendish to Melea, nodding to indicate Miss Egg as the other party of whom she was speaking. "I feel it such a privilege to have a friend like her to confide my children to, and one that I can welcome into my drawing-room on the footing of a friend!"

"I have heard that Miss Egg is devoted to her occupation," observed Melea.

"O, entirely. There is the greatest difficulty in persuading her to relax, I assure you. And all without the smallest occasion for her going

out, except her disinterested attachment to me. You should see her way with the children,—how she makes them love her. She has such sensibility!"

"What is the peculiarity of her method?" inquired Melea. "She gives me to understand that there is some one peculiarity."

"O yes. It is a peculiar method that has been wonderfully successful abroad; and indeed I see that it is, by my own children, though I seldom go into the school-room. Great self-denial, is it not? But I would not interfere for the world.—O,"—seeing Melea waiting for an exposition of the system,—"she uses a black board and white chalk. We had the board made as soon as we came, and fixed up in the school-room,—and white chalk.—But I would not interfere for the world; and I assure you I am quite afraid of practising on her feelings in any way. She has such sensibility!"

Well, but,—the peculiarity of method. And Melea explained that she was particularly anxious to hear all that was going on in the department of education, as a boy was expected to arrive soon at her father's,—a little lad of ten years old, from India, who would be placed partly under her charge, and might remain some years in their house.

Indeed! Well, Miss Egg questioned the children very much. So much, that Mr. Cavendish and herself took particular care not to question them at all, both because they had quite enough of it from Miss Egg, and because

the papa and mamma were afraid of interfering with the methods of the governess. And then, for what was not taught by questions, there was the black board and white chalk.—But, after all, the great thing was that the teacher should have sensibility, without which she could not gain the hearts of children, or understand their little feelings.

All was now very satisfactory. Melea had obtained the complete recipe of education:—questions, sensibility, and chalk.

Mr. Longe was by this time hoping that the Miss Berkeleys would offer to go away, that he might escort them home before any one else should arrive to usurp the office. Mortifying as it was to him to feel himself eclipsed by his curate, he was compelled to acknowledge in his own mind that he was so as often as Henry Craig was present, and that it was therefore politic to make such advances as he could during Henry's absence. Mr. Longe's non-residence was a great disadvantage to him. Living fifteen miles off, and doing duty in another church, he was out of the way of many little occasions of ingratiating himself, and could never be invested with that interest which Henry Craig inspired in a peculiar degree as a religious teacher and devotional guide. The only thing to be done was to visit Haleham and the Berkeleys as often as possible during Henry's absence, to obtain the favour of Fanny's father, and to show the lady herself that an accomplished clergyman, who could quote the sayings of various friends who

moved in "the best society," who knew the world a thousand times better than Henry Craig, and could appreciate herself as well as her little fortune, was not to be despised. He was at this moment longing to intimate to her what encouragement he had this very day received from her father, when, to his great disappointment, Mr. Berkeley and Mr. Cavendish came in together,—just in time to save Fanny's call from appearing inordinately long.

"All over? All safe? How relieved we are to see you!" exclaimed the clergyman.

"Safe, my dear Sir? Yes. What would you have had us be afraid of?" said Mr. Berkeley, who, however, carried traces of recent agitation in his countenance and manner.

"Father!" said Melea, "you do not mean to say that nothing more has happened than you meet with from the paupers every week."

"Only being nearly tossed in a blanket, my dear, that's all. And Pye was all but kicked down stairs. But we have them safe now,—the young ladies and all. Ah! Melea; you have a good deal to learn yet about the spirit of your sex, my dear. The women beat the men hollow this morning."

Mr. Cavendish observed that the glaziers would be busy for some days, the women within the workhouse having smashed every pane of every window within reach, while the out-door paupers were engaging the attention of magistrates, constables, and governor.

"But what was it all about?" asked Fanny.

"The paupers have been complaining of two or three things for some weeks past, and they demanded the redress of all in a lump to-day; as if we magistrates could alter the whole state of things in a day to please them. In the first place, they one and all asked more pay, because the same allowance buys only two-thirds what it bought when the scale was fixed. This they charged upon Cavendish and me. It is well you were not there, Cavendish; you would hardly have got away again."

"Why, what would they have done with me?" asked Cavendish, with a constrained simper, and a pull up of the head which was meant to be heroic.

"In addition to the tossing they intended for me, they would have given you a ducking, depend upon it. Heartily as they hate all bankers, they hate a Haleham banker above all. Indeed I heard some of them wish they had you laid neatly under the workhouse pump."

"Ha! ha! very good, very pleasant, and refreshing on a warm day like this," said Cavendish, wiping his forehead, while nobody else was aware that the day was particularly warm. "Well, Sir; and what did you do to appease these insolent fellows?"

"Appease them! O, I soon managed that. A cool man can soon get the better of half a dozen passionate ones, you know."

The girls looked with wonder at one another; for they knew that coolness in emergencies was one of the last qualities their father had to boast

of. Fanny was vexed to see that Mr. Longe observed and interpreted the look. She divined by his half-smile, that he did not think her father had been very cool.

"I desired them to go about their business," continued Mr. Berkeley, "and when that would not do, I called the constables."

"Called indeed," whispered Mr. Longe to his cousin. "It would have been strange if they had not heard him."

"But what were the other complaints, Sir?" inquired Fanny, wishing her father to leave the rest of his peculiar adventure to be told at home.

"Every man of them refused to take dollars. They say that no more than five shillings' worth of commodities, even at the present prices, is to be had for a dollar, notwithstanding the government order that it shall pass at five and sixpence. Unless, therefore, we would reckon the dollar at five shillings, they would not take it."

"Silly fellows!" exclaimed Cavendish. "If they would step to London, they would see notices in the shop-windows that dollars are taken at five and ninepence, and even at six shillings."

"There must be some cheating there, however," replied Mr. Berkeley; "for you and I know that dollars are not now really worth four and sixpence. Those London shopkeepers must want to sell them for the melting-pot; or they have two prices."

"Then how can you expect these paupers to be satisfied with dollars?" inquired Melea.

"What can we do, Miss Melea?" said Cavendish. "There is scarcely any change to be had. You cannot conceive the difficulty of carrying on business just now, for want of change."

"The dollars have begun to disappear since the government order came out, like all the rest of the coin," observed Mr. Berkeley: "but yet they were almost the only silver coin we had: and when these fellows would not take them, for all we could say, we were obliged to pay them chiefly in copper. While we sent hither and thither, to the grocer's and the draper's——"

"And the bank," observed Cavendish, consequentially.

"Aye, aye: but we sent to the nearest places first, for there was no time to lose. While, as I was saying, the messengers were gone, the paupers got round poor Pye, and abused him heartily. I began to think of proposing an adjournment to the court-yard, for I really expected they would kick him down the steps into the street."

"Poor innocent man! What could they abuse him for?" asked Melea.

"Only for not having his till full of coin, as it used to be. As if it was not as great a hardship to him as to his neighbours, to have no change. He is actually obliged, he tells me, to throw together his men's wages so as to make an even sum in pounds, and pay them in a lump, leaving them to settle the odd shillings and pence among themselves."

"With a bank in the same street!" exclaimed Fanny.

Cavendish declared that his bank issued change as fast as it could be procured, but that it all disappeared immediately, except the halfpence, in which, therefore, they made as large a proportion of their payments as their customers would receive. People began to use canvass bags to carry their change in; and no wonder; since there were few pockets that would bear fifteen shillings' worth of halfpence. The bank daily paid away as much as fifteen shillings' worth to one person.

Mr. Berkeley avouched the partners of the D—— bank to be equally at a loss to guess where all the coin issued by them went to. Mrs. Cavendish complained of the difficulty of shopping and marketing without change. Miss Egg feared Mr. Longe must be at great trouble in collecting his dues of tithes; and the rector took advantage of the hint to represent his requiring them in kind as proceeding from consideration for the convenience of the farmers.

All agreed that the present state of the money system of the country was too strange and inconvenient to last long. Though some people seemed to be growing rich in a very extraordinary way, and there was therefore a party every where to insist that all was going right, the complaints of landlords, stipendiaries, and paupers would make themselves heard and attended to, and the convenience of all who were concerned in exchanges could not be long thwarted, if it was desired to avoid very disagreeable consequences.

So the matter was settled in anticipation by the party in Mr. Cavendish's drawing-room, immediately after which the Berkeleys took their leave, attended by Mr. Longe.

Chapter IV.

WINE AND WISDOM.

A CHANGE was indeed inevitable, as Mr. Cavendish well knew; and to prepare for it had been the great object of his life for some time past. To make the most of his credit, while the credit of bankers was high, was what he talked of to his wife as the duty of a family man; and she fully agreed in it, as she well might, since she had brought him a little fortune, which had long ago been lost, partly through speculation, and partly through the extravagance which had marked the beginning of their married life. Mrs. Cavendish had not the least objection to getting this money back again, if it could be obtained by her husband's credit; and she spared no pains to lessen the family expenses, and increase, by her influence, the disposable means of the bank, on the understanding that, as soon as the profits should amount to a sufficient sum, they should be applied to the purchase of an estate, which was to be settled upon herself. Thus she would not only regain her due, but some resource would be secured in case of the very pro-

bable chance of a crash before all Mr. Cavendish's objects were attained. Economy was therefore secretly practised by both in their respective departments, while they kept up a show of opulence; and the activity of the gentleman in his various concerns procured him the name of Jack of all trades. Nobody could justly say, however, that he was master of none; for in the art of trading with other people's money he was an adept.

When he opened his bank, his disposable means were somewhat short of those with which bankers generally set up business. He had, like others, the deposits lodged by customers, which immediately amounted to a considerable sum, as he did not disdain to receive the smallest deposits, used no ceremony in asking for them from all the simple folks who came in his way, and offered a larger interest than common upon them. He had also the advantage of lodgments of money to be transmitted to some distant place, or paid at some future time; and he could occasionally make these payments in the paper of his bank. Again, he had his own notes, which he circulated very extensively, without being particularly scrupulous as to whether he should be able to answer the demands they might bring upon him. One class of disposable means, however, he managed to begin banking without, —and that was, capital of his own. The little that he had, and what he had been able to borrow, were invested in the corn, coal, and timber concern; and upon this concern the bank wholly

depended. He undersold all the corn, coal, and timber merchants in the county, which it was less immediately ruinous to do when prices were at the highest than either before or after; and, by thus driving a trade, he raised money enough to meet the first return of his notes. This nervous beginning being got over, he went on flourishingly, getting his paper out in all directions, and always contriving to extend his other business in proportion, by a greater or less degree of underselling, till he began to grow so sanguine, that his wife took upon herself the task of watching whether he kept cash enough in the bank to meet any unexpected demand. The money thus kept in hand yielding no interest, while every other employment of banker's capital,—the discounting of bills, the advancement of money in overdrawn accounts, and the investment in government securities,—does yield interest, bankers are naturally desirous of keeping as small a sum as possible in this unproductive state; and never banker ventured to reduce his cash in hand to a smaller amount than Cavendish. His wife perpetually asked him how he was prepared for the run of a single hour upon his bank, if such a thing should happen? to which he as often replied by asking when he had ever pretended to be so prepared? and, moreover, what occasion there was to be so prepared, when nobody was dreaming of a run, and when she knew perfectly well that the best thing he could do would be to stop payment at the very commencement of a panic, having before-

hand placed all his property out of the reach of his creditors.

Such were his means, and such the principles of his profits;—means which could be successfully employed, principles which could be plausibly acted upon, only in the times of banking run mad, when, the currency having been desperately tampered with, the door was opened to abuses of every sort; and the imprudence of some parties encouraged the knavery of others, to the permanent injury of every class of society in turn.

As for the expenses of the Haleham bank, they were easily met. The owner of the house took out the rent and repairs in coals; and Enoch Pye was paid in the same way for the necessary stationery, stamps, &c.; so that there remained only the taxes, and the salaries of the people employed—a part of the latter being detained as deposits. Thus Mr. Cavendish achieved his policy of having as many incomings and as few outgoings, except his own notes, as possible.

It is not to be supposed but that Cavendish suffered much from apprehension of his credit being shaken, not by any circumstances which should suggest the idea of a run to his confiding neighbours, but through the watchfulness of other banking firms. As it is for the interest of all banks that banking credit should be preserved, a jealous observation is naturally exercised by the fraternity, the consciousness of which must be extremely irksome to the unsound. The neighbourhood of the Berkeley

family was very unpleasant to the Cavendishes, though no people could be more unsuspicious or less prying: such, at least, was the character of the ladies; and Mr. Berkeley was, though a shrewd man, so open in his manner, and, notwithstanding a strong tinge of worldliness, so simple in his ways of thinking and acting, that even Mr. Cavendish would have had no fear of him, but for the fact of his having a son of high reputation as a man of business in a bank in London. Cavendish could not bear to hear of Horace; and dreaded, above all things, the occasional visits of the young man to his family. Never, since he settled at Haleham, had he been so panic-struck, as on learning, in the next spring, that Horace had been seen alighting at his father's gate from the stage-coach from London.

Horace's sisters were little more prepared for his arrival than Mr. Cavendish. There was some mystery in his visit, as they judged from the shortness of the notice he gave them, from its being an unusual time of year for him to take holiday, and from their father's alternations of mood. Yet it seemed as if Horace had never been so much wanted. Fanny, especially, needed his support in her rejection of Mr. Longe, whom her father was disposed not only to favour, but almost to force upon her. In his gloomy moods, he told her that she little knew what she was about in refusing such an establishment, and recurred to the old intimation, that his daughters had better prepare themselves for a reverse of

fortune. When in high spirits, he wearied Fanny with jests on Mr. Longe's devotion to her, and with exhibitions of all his accomplishments; and when prevailed upon to quit the subject, he let her see, in the midst of all his professions about leaving perfect liberty of choice to his children, that he meant never to forgive Mr. Longe's final rejection. Melea, and even Mrs. Berkeley, could do nothing but sympathise and hope: Horace was the only one who could effectually interfere. Did he come for this purpose? the sisters asked one another; or was it, could it be, to interfere with some one else, who was as much less acceptable than Mr. Longe to their father, as he was more so to themselves? Could Horace be come, Melea wondered, to call Henry Craig to account for being at the house so often?

It was a great relief to her to find Horace's head so full of business as it appeared to be. She would have complained of this, if such had been his mood during his last visit; but now she had no objection to see him turn from his favourite bed of hepaticas and jonquils, to answer with animation some question of his father's about the price of gold; and when, for the first time in her life, she had dreaded riding with him between the hawthorn hedges, and over the breezy downs which they used to haunt as children, her spirits actually rose, because, at the most interesting point of the ride, he woke out of a reverie to ask what proportion of Cavendish's notes, in comparison with other kinds of

money, she supposed to be in the hands of the poorer sort of her acquaintance in the town.

In fact, nothing was further from Horace's thoughts, when he came down, than any intervention in favour of or against either of the clergymen, however much interest he felt in his sister's concerns, when he became a witness of what was passing. The reason of his journey was, that he wished to communicate with his father on certain suspicious appearances, which seemed to indicate that all was not going on right at Cavendish's; and also to give his opinion to the partners of the D—— bank as to what steps they should take respecting some forged notes, for which payment had lately been demanded of them. When two or three excursions to D—— had been made by the father and son, and when, on three successive days, they had remained in the dining-room for hours after tea was announced, the ladies began to grow extremely uneasy as to the cause of all this consultation,—of their father's gravity and Horace's reveries. Horace perceived this, and urged his father to take the whole of their little family into his confidence, intimating the comfort that it would be to him to be able to open his mind to his daughters when his son must leave him, and the hardship that it was to his mother to be restrained from speaking of that which was uppermost in her mind to those in whose presence she lived every hour of the day. It was difficult to imagine what could be Mr. Berkeley's objection to confidence in this particular instance,

while it was his wont to speak openly of his affairs to all his children alike. He made some foolish excuses,—such as asking what girls should know about banking affairs, and how it was possible that they should care about the matter?—excuses so foolish, that his son was convinced that there was some other reason at the bottom of this reserve. Whatever it was, however, it gave way at length; and Horace had permission to tell them as much as he pleased.

"Must you go, mother?" he asked that afternoon, as Mrs. Berkeley rose to leave the table after dinner. "We want you to help us to tell my sisters what we have been consulting about ever since I came."

The ladies instantly resumed their seats.

"How frightened Fanny looks!" observed her father, laughing; "and Melea is bracing herself up, as if she expected to see a ghost. My dears, what are you afraid of?"

"Nothing, father; but suspense has tried us a little, that is all. We believe you would not keep bad news from us; but we have hardly known what to think or expect for some days past."

"Expect nothing, my dears; for nothing particular is going to happen, that I know of; and it may do me a serious injury if you look as if you believed there was. The bank is not going to fail; nor am I thinking of locking up Fanny, because she will not accept Mr. Longe. Fanny shall have her own way about that; and I will never mention the fellow to her again."

Fanny burst into tears; and her father, instead of showing any of his usual irritation on this subject, drew her to him, and said he was sorry for having teazed her so long about a shabby, boasting, artful wretch, who deserved to be posted for a swindler.

"Father!" exclaimed Melea, who thought this judgment upon Mr. Longe as extravagant in one direction as the former in another.

"I would not say exactly that," interposed Horace; "but there is no question about his being unworthy of Fanny; and I would do all I fairly could to prevent his having her, if she liked him ever so well. As she does not like him, there is no occasion to waste any more words upon him."

As Horace laid an emphasis on the last word, Melea's heart rose to her lips. Henry's name was to come next, she feared. The name, however, was avoided. Her father put his arm round her as she sat next him, saying,—

"As for you, my little Melea, we shall let you alone about such matters for some years to come. When you are five-and-twenty, like Fanny, we may teaze you as we have been teazing her; but what has a girl of eighteen to do with such grave considerations as settling in life? You are too young for cares, dear. Be free and gay for a few years, while you can; and remember that it is only in novels that girls marry under twenty now-a-days. Trust your best friends for wishing to make you happy, and helping you to settle, when the right time and the right person come together."

Melea smiled amidst a few tears. She owned that this was very kindly said; but she did not the less feel that it was not at all to the purpose of her case, and that she could not depute it to anybody to judge when was the right time, and who was the right person.

"Fanny is longing to know what has so suddenly changed your opinion of her suitor," observed Mrs. Berkeley, in order to give Melea time to recover. "Unless you explain yourself, my dear, she will run away with the notion that he has actually been swindling."

Mr. Berkeley thought such transactions as Longe's deserved a name very nearly as bad as swindling. Horace, who had for particular reasons been inquiring lately into the characters of the whole Cavendish connexion, had learned that Longe had debts, contracted when at college, and that he had been paying off some of them in a curious manner lately. He had not only insisted on taking his tithe in kind, and on being paid his other dues in the legal coin of the realm,—which he had an undoubted right to do; but he had sold his guineas at twenty-seven shillings, and even his dollars at six shillings; while he had paid his debts in bank-notes;—in those of his cousin's bank, wherever he could contrive to pass them.

"Shabby, very shabby," Horace pronounced this conduct, and, as far as selling the coin went, illegal; but it was no more than many worthier people were doing now, under the strong temptation held out by the extraordinary condition of

the currency. Those were chiefly to blame for such frauds who had sported with the circulating medium, and brought the whole system of exchanges into its present ticklish state.

"How came it into this state?" asked Melea. "Who began meddling with it? We shall never understand, unless you tell us from the beginning."

"From the very beginning, Melea? From the days when men used to exchange wheat against bullocks, and clothing of skins against wicker huts?"

"No, no. We can imagine a state of barter; and we have read of the different kinds of rude money in use when people first began to see the advantage of a circulating medium;—skins in one country, shells in another, and wedges of salt in a third: and we know that metals were agreed upon among civilized people, as being the best material to make money of; and that to save the trouble of perpetually examining the pieces, they were formed and stamped, and so made to signify certain values. And——"

"And do you suppose they always keep the same value in reality; supposing them of the due weight and fineness?"

"No, certainly. They become of less and greater real value in proportion to the quantity of them; in the same way as other commodities are cheap or dear in proportion to the supply in the market. And I suppose this is the reason why money is now so cheap,—there

being a quantity of paper money in the market in addition to the coin there was before. But then, I cannot understand where the coin is all gone, if it be true that we have too much money in consequence of its circulating together with paper."

"The coin is gone abroad, and more paper still has taken the place of it. This is proved by two circumstances; first, that all commodities except money have risen in price; and secondly, that we have more foreign goods than usual in the market, notwithstanding the war."

"To be sure, less of every thing being given in exchange for one thing proves that there is more of that one thing to be disposed of. And the foreign goods you speak of pour in, I suppose, in return for the gold we send abroad."

"Yes. A guinea buys nearly as much abroad as it bought three years ago, while it buys much less at home,—(unless indeed it be sold in an illegal manner.) Our guineas are therefore sent abroad, and goods come in return."

Fanny thought it had been also illegal to export guineas. So it was, her father told her; but the chances of escaping detection were so great that many braved the penalty for the sake of the speculation; and, in fact, the greater part of the money issued by the mint was so disposed of. He took up the newspaper of the day, and showed her an account of a discovery that had been made on board a ship at Dover. This ship—the New Union, of London—was found on the first search to contain four thousand and fifty

guineas; and there was every reason to believe that a much larger sum was on board, concealed in places hollowed out for the reception of gold. Horace told also of a ship being stopped on leaving port, the week before, on board of which ten thousand guineas had been found.

"What an enormous expense it must be to coin so much money in vain!" exclaimed Fanny. "It seems as if the bankers and the government worked in direct opposition to each other; the one issuing paper to drive out gold; and the other supplying more money continually to depreciate the value of that which the banks put out."

"And in putting out paper money," observed Melea, "we seem to throw away the only regulator of the proportion of money to commodities. While we have coin only, we may be pretty sure that when there is too much of it, it will go away to buy foreign goods; and when too little, that more will flow in from foreigners coming to buy of us: but our bankers' notes not being current out of England, we may be flooded with them and find no vent."

"And then," observed Mrs. Berkeley, sighing, as if with some painful recollection, "comes a lessening of the value of money; and then follow laws to forbid the value being lessened; and next, of course, breaches of the law——"

"A law!" exclaimed Melea. "Was there ever a law to prevent an article which is particularly plentiful being cheap? It seems to me that the shortest and surest way for the law-

makers is to destroy the superabundance, and thus put cheapness out of the question."

Horace laughed, and asked what she thought of a government that first encouraged an unlimited issue of paper money by withdrawing the limitations which had previously existed, and then made a solemn declaration that the notes thus issued were and must remain, in despite of their quantity, of the same value as the scarce metal they were intended to represent. Melea supposed this an impossible case; a caricature of human folly.

"Do you mean," said she, "that if where there had been a hundred pounds in gold to exchange against commodities, eighty of them disappeared, and a hundred and eighty pound notes were added, those two hundred notes and pounds were each to buy as much as when there was only one hundred? Did the government declare this?"

"Its declaration was precisely on this principle."

"How very absurd! It is only condemning half the money to remain over, unused, when the commodities are all exchanged."

"It might as well have been thrown into the fire before the exchanging began," observed Fanny.

"If it had been held in a common stock," replied her brother: "but as long as it is private property, how is it to be determined whose money shall be destroyed?"

"Or whose to remain unused," added Melea.

"Is it not to be supposed," asked Horace,

that the buyers and sellers will make any kind of sly and circuitous bargain which may enable them to suit their mutual convenience, or that the buyers will, if possible, avoid buying, rather than submit to have half their money rendered useless by an interference which benefits nobody?"

"The buyers and sellers will come to a quiet compromise," observed Fanny. "The seller will say, 'You shall have thirty shillings' worth of goods for two pound notes, which will be better worth your while than getting nothing in exchange for your second note, and better worth my while than letting you slip as a customer, though I, in my turn, shall get only thirty shillings' worth for these two notes.' And the buyer agreeing to this, the notes will continue to circulate at the value of fifteen shillings each."

"In defiance of the punishments of the law," added Mrs. Berkeley, again sighing.

"One would think," observed her husband, "that there are crimes and misdemeanours enough for the law to take notice of, without treating as such contracts which, after all, are as much overruled by the natural laws of distribution as by the will of the contractors. It would be as wise to pillory by the side of a sheep-stealer, a man who sells potatoes dear after a bad season, as to fine a man for getting a little with his depreciated money, rather than get nothing at all. Your mother could tell you of something worse than any fine that has been inflicted for such a factitious offence."

"Melea gives us up, I see," said Horace. "She can never esteem us again, father, while we are aiding and abetting in circulating this horrible paper money. She would make a bonfire of all the bank notes in Great Britain as they are returned to the bankers. Would not you, Melea?"

"I do not see why I should run into such an extreme," she replied. "If there were no means of limiting the quantity of paper money, I might speculate on such a bonfire; but if a moderate amount of bank notes saves the expense of using gold and silver, I do not see why the saving should not be made."

"If white ware and glass answered all the purposes of gold and silver plate," observed Fanny, "it would be wise to set apart our gold and silver to make watches, and other things that are better made of the precious metals than of anything else.—What do you suppose to be the expense of a metallic currency to this country, Horace?"

Horace believed that the expense of a gold currency was about one million to every ten millions circulated: that is, that the 10 per cent. profit which the metal would have brought, if employed productively, is lost by its being used as a circulating medium. This, however, is not the only loss to the country, the wear of coin, and its destruction by accidents, being considerable; besides which, much less employment is afforded by coining, than by working up gold for other purposes. Supposing the gold currency of the country to be thirty millions, the expense of

providing it could scarcely be reckoned at less than four millions; a sum which it is certainly desirable to save, if it can be done by fair means.

"The metals being bought by our goods," observed Fanny, "it seems to be a clear loss to use them unproductively. The only question therefore appears to be whether bank notes make a good substitute. They might, I suppose, by good management, be made sufficiently steady in value. They might, by common agreement, be made to signify any variety of convenient sums. They may be much more easily carried about; a note for the largest sum being no heavier than for the smallest. There is not the perfect likeness of one to another that there is in coins of the same denomination, but the nature of the promise they bear upon their faces serves as an equivalent security. As to their durability and their beauty, there is little to be said."

"As to their beauty, very little," replied Horace; "for, if a new bank note is a pretty thing, few things are uglier than a soiled, and pasted, and crumpled one. But, with respect to their durability, you should remember that it signifies little in comparison with that of a medium which is also a commodity. If a bank note is burned, the country loses nothing. It is the misfortune of the holder, and a gain to the banker from whose bank it was issued."

"Like a guinea being dropped in the street, and presently picked up," observed Melea.—"It is not lost, but only changes hands by accident. Yet it seems as if there must be a loss when a

100*l.* bank note goes up the chimney in smoke, leaving only that below with which children may play 'there goes the parson, and there goes the clerk.'"

"Nay," said Horace, "consider what a bank note is. What are the essentials of a bank note, Melea?"

"It would be strange if we did not know what a bank note was, would it not, father, when you have been spreading them before our eyes continually for this twelvemonth? First comes 'I promise to pay——'"

"Never mind the words. The words in which the promise is made are not essential."

"A bank note is a promissory note for a definite sum; and it must be stamped."

"And payable on demand. Do not forget that, pray. It is this which makes it differ from all other promissory notes.—Well, now: what is the intrinsic value of a bank note? Its cost of production is so small as to be scarcely calculable."

"It is, in fact, circulating credit," observed Melea; "which is certainly not among the things which can be destroyed by fire."

"It is only the representative of value which goes off in smoke," observed Horace. "The value remains."

"Where? In what form?"

"That depends upon the nature of the paper currency. Before bank notes assumed their present form,—when they were merely promissory notes, which it occurred to bankers to dis-

count as they would any other kind of bills, the property of the issuers was answerable for them, like the goods of any merchant who pays in bills; and the extent of the issue was determined by the banker's credit. Then came the time when all bank notes were convertible into coin, at the pleasure of the holder; and then the value, of which the notes were the representatives, lay in the banker's coffers, in the form of gold and silver money. As for the actual value of the Bank of England notes issued since the Restriction Act passed, you had better ask somebody else where it is deposited, and in what form, for I cannot pretend to tell you. I only know that the sole security the public has for ever recovering it lies in the honour of the managers of the Bank of England."

"What is that Restriction Act?" asked Melea. "I have heard of it till I am weary of the very name; and I have no clear notion about it, except that it passed in 1797."

"Before this time," replied her brother, "by this 9th of May, 1814, every banker's daughter in England ought to be familiar with the currency romance of 1797."

"In order to be prepared for the catastrophe," muttered Mr. Berkeley, who had forebodings which made the present subject not the most agreeable in the world to him.

"First, what is the Bank of England?" asked Fanny. "It is the greatest bank of deposit and circulation in the world, I know; but to whom does it belong, and how did it arise?"

"It came into existence a little more than a hundred years before the great era of its life,—the period of restriction. Government wanted money very much in 1694, and a loan was raised, the subscribers to which received eight per cent. interest, and 4000*l.* a-year for managing the affair, and were presented with a charter, by which they were constituted a banking company, with peculiar privileges."

"No other banking company is allowed to consist of more than six persons; this is one of their privileges, is it not?"

"Yes; it was added in 1708, and has done a vast deal of mischief; and will do more, I am afraid, before it is abolished.*—The very circumstances of the origin of the Bank of England brought it, you see, into immediate connexion with the government, under whose protection it has remained ever since. Its charter has been renewed as often as it expired; and has still to run till a year's notice after the 1st of August, 1833. The government and the Bank have helped one another in their times of need; the Bank lending money to government, and the government imposing the restriction we were talking of in the very extremity of time to prevent the Bank stopping payment. It also afforded military protection to the establishment at the time of the dreadful riots in 1780."

"Well: now for the Restriction Act."

* Some years after the date of this conversation, *i. e.* in 1826, permission was given for banking companies, *not within* 65 *miles of London*, to consist of any number of partners.

"At that memorable time, from 1794 to 1797, the Bank had to send out much more money than was convenient or safe. We were at war; there were foreign loans to be raised; heavy bills were drawn from abroad on the Treasury; and the government asked for large and still larger advances, till the Bank had made enormous issues of notes, and was almost drained of the coin it had promised to pay on demand. It was just at this time that the French invasion was expected; every body was seized with a panic, and a general rush was made to the country banks, several of which could not answer so sudden a demand for cash, and failed. The panic spread to London, and the Bank of England was beset on every side. On Saturday, the 25th of February, 1797, the coffers of the Bank had very little money in them; and there was every prospect of a terrible run on the Monday. This was the time when government made its celebrated interference. It issued an order, on the Sunday, that the Bank should not pay away any cash till parliament had been consulted; and this was the news with which the tremendous throng of claimants was met on the Monday morning."

"I wonder it did not cause as fierce a riot as that of 1780," observed Fanny. "It is such an intolerable injustice to induce people to take promissory notes on condition of having cash whenever they please, and then to get government to prohibit the promise being kept!"

"There would have been little use in rioting," replied Horace. "Things were brought to such

a pass that the Bank must either fail that day, or defer the fulfilment of its engagements; and as things were at this pass, the restriction was perhaps the best expedient that could have been adopted. Nobody, however, supposed that the prohibition would have been continued to this day. Here we are, in 1814, and the Bank has not begun to pay off its promissory notes yet."

"Then what security is there against an inundation of promissory notes that may never be paid?"

"None whatever, but in the honour of the Directors of the Bank of England. There appears to be good ground for trusting in this honour; but a better security ought, in a matter of such paramount importance, to have been provided long ago.—But we have not spoken yet of the Act of Restriction; only of the Order in Council.—As soon as parliament met, a committee inquired into the affairs of the Bank, and found them in very good condition; and parliament therefore decreed the restriction to remain till six months after the conclusion of peace."

"But there has been peace since that time."

"Yes; and there will be another, very likely, before the Bank pays cash again. It is much easier to quit cash payments than to resume them; the temptation to an over-issue is so great when responsibility is destroyed, and especially when moderation at the outset has propitiated public confidence."

"Then there was moderation at first?"

"For three years after the restriction, the issues were so moderate, that the notes of the Bank of England were esteemed a little more valuable than gold, and actually bore a small premium. Then there was an over-issue, and their value fell; afterwards it rose again; and it has since fluctuated, declining on the whole, till now."

"And what are Bank of England notes worth now?"

"Less than they have ever been. So long ago as 1810, parliament declared that there had been an over-issue, and recommended a return to cash payments in two years; but four years are gone, and cash payments are not begun, and the depreciation of the Bank notes is greater than ever."

"That is partly owing, I suppose," said Fanny, "to the increase of country banks. Melea and I could count several new ones within our recollection."

"At the time of the restriction, there were fewer than three hundred country banks in existence; there are now more than seven hundred."

"And are so many wanted?"

"We shall soon see," muttered Mr. Berkeley. "I much doubt whether there will be two-thirds the number by this day twelvemonth.—Aye, you may well look frightened, girls. Confidence is shaken already, I can tell you; and even you can see what is likely to follow when banking credit is impaired."

"If these terrible consequences happen, father, will you attribute them to the Bank of England being excused from paying cash?"

"That first destroyed the balance of the currency, which will have much to do to right itself again. Formerly, the Bank and its customers were a check upon each other, as are paper and gold, when the one is convertible into the other. As the profits of the Bank depend on the amount of its issues, the public is always sure of having money enough, while affairs take their natural course.—On the other hand, the public was as sure to make the Bank lose by an over-issue; since an over-issue raises the price of gold, which makes people eager to have gold for their notes, which again, of course, obliges the Bank to buy gold at a loss to coin money to pay for their own over-issues. Now, by this penalty being taken from over their heads, the balance of checks is destroyed. The people are more sure than ever of having money enough; but there is no security whatever against their having too much. Witness the state of our currency at this hour."

"If we could but contrive any security against over-issue," observed Melea, "we might do without coin (or at least gold coin) entirely: but, as there does not appear to be any such, I suppose we must go on with a mixed currency. What a pity such an expense cannot be saved!"

"And it is the more vexatious when one thinks of the loss by hoarding," observed Fanny. "No one would think of hoarding paper."

"Certainly; if it was the only sort of money."

"Well; many do hoard gold,—besides Mrs. Parndon. How many years will her guineas have been lying by when she dies!—(and I do not believe she will part with them but in death.) They might have doubled themselves by this time, perhaps, if they had been put to use instead of being buried in her garden, or under the floor, or among the feathers in her feather-bed, or wherever else they may be."

"I was going to ask," said Horace, "how she comes to make public such an act as hoarding: but you seem not to know the place of deposit."

Fanny explained that not even Hester knew more than that her mother had a stock of hoarded guineas; and she had mentioned it only to such particular friends as the Berkeleys.

"The Cavendishes are not on the list of particular friends then, I suppose," observed Horace, "or there would have been an end of the hoarding before this time. Mr. Cavendish does not approve of any reserves of guineas within twenty miles of his bank."

Melea was struck by her brother's countenance and manner, whenever he mentioned Mr. Cavendish. There was now something more conveyed by both than the good-humoured contempt with which the whole family had been accustomed to regard the man.

"Horace," said she, "I never suspected you of hating any body before; but now I do believe you hate Mr. Cavendish. I wish you would

tell us why; for I had rather think worse of him than of you."

"Yes, dear, I will tell you why; and this was what you were to hear this afternoon."

Mr. Berkeley moved uneasily in his chair, and his wife stole anxious glances at him, while Horace related that the proprietors of the D—— bank had been for some time aware that forgeries of their notes were circulating pretty extensively; that inquiries had in consequence been secretly made, under Horace's direction, in order to the fraud being put a stop to; that these inquiries had issued in the deed being brought home to the parties.

"O, we shall have a trial and execution," groaned Fanny.

No such thing, her brother assured her. In times when banking credit did not, at the best, keep its ground very firmly, there was every inducement to a bank not to shake it further by publishing the fact that notes circulating in its name were not to be trusted. The fact of this forgery had been kept a profound secret by the partners of the D—— bank.

"But what is the consequence to the holders of the forged notes?"

"Nothing. We pay them on demand without remark."

"But what a loss to the bank, if the forgery is extensive!"

Mr. Berkeley observed gloomily that he had given cash payment for two forged 5*l.* notes, and one of 10*l.* this very morning. Yet this loss

was preferable to exposing the credit of the bank to any shock; at least, when there were the means of stopping the forged issue.

"Then you have certainly discovered the parties?"

"I saw the principal shipped for America the day I left London," replied Horace; "and the rest know that we have our eye upon them. The only doubtful thing now is whether we may take their word for the amount they have issued. Another month will show."

"Do all your notes come back to you within a few weeks, father?" asked Melea. "I thought they remained out for years. I am sure I have more than one note of the D—— bank that is above a year old."

"Yes; some are now circulating that belonged to the first issue after I became a partner; but these have been re-issued. We reckon that most of our notes come back within six weeks."

"You did not surely suppose," said Horace, "that new notes are issued every time? Why should not the old ones be used as long as they will last?"

"I did not know that the stamps were allowed to serve more than one turn."

"This is provided for by the issuers being obliged to purchase a license, which costs 30*l*., and which must be annually renewed. The Bank of England is the only exception to this rule; that establishment being permitted to compound for the stamp-duties by paying so much per million on its issues. It is on this point, (of the

renewal of the license,) that we hope to catch Cavendish. He has not renewed within the given time."

"But why should you?" cried Fanny, with some indignation. "What affair is it of yours? Let the Stamp-office look to it; and let us mind our own business, instead of meddling with our neighbour's."

"Besides," added Melea, "what becomes of the banking credit which needs to be taken such extraordinary care of just now? Shake Cavendish's credit, and you shake that of other banks in some degree, according to your own doctrine."

"If he had never meddled with our credit," said Mr. Berkeley, "he might have cheated the Stamp-office to his heart's content, for anything we should have done to prevent it. But having acted the part that he has by us——"

Fanny and Melea looked at each other with sorrow in their faces; which their brother observed, and quietly said,

"It is not in a spirit of retaliation that we are going to act against Cavendish. It is necessary, for the public safety, that his bank should be closed while there is a chance of its discharging its obligations. If it goes on another year,—I say this in the confidence of our own family circle,—it must break, and ruin half the people in Haleham. If Cavendish can be so timely beset with difficulties,—which, remember, he has brought on himself,—as to be induced to give up the bank, and confine himself to his other

businesses, it is possible that those who have trusted him may get their dues, and that banking credit may be saved the shock which his failure must otherwise soon bring upon it."

"But what is the penalty?"

"A fine of 100*l.* for every act of issue after the term of license has expired. I am now employed in discovering what Cavendish's issues have been since the expiration of his license. I hope we may find him liable for just so much as may make him glad to close his bank for the sake of a composition; and not enough to ruin him; though I fancy it would not require a very heavy liability to do that."

"What a hateful business to be engaged in!" exclaimed Melea.

Very disagreeable indeed, Horace admitted; but Cavendish's offences towards the D—— bank deserved the worst punishment they could bring upon him. He had known of the forgeries of their notes longer than they had; and not only had he given them no warning, but he had whispered the fact elsewhere in every quarter where it could injure their credit just so far as to make people shy of taking their notes, without causing an abrupt shock, in which he might himself have been involved. He insinuated no doubts of the stability of their house; but told several people in confidence that forgeries of their notes were abroad, so well executed, that it was scarcely possible to distinguish the true notes from the false.

"How came he to know sooner than the

partners themselves?" inquired Melea: but neither father nor brother appeared to hear the question.

"May one ask about the forgers," inquired Fanny, "who they are, and how you dealt with them?"

"No; you may not ask," replied her brother, smiling. "We are bound not to tell this, even to our own families. Be satisfied in your ignorance; for it is a very sad story, and it would give you nothing but pain to hear it."

The whole party sat in silence for some minutes, the girls gazing in reverie on the green lawn over which the evening shadows were stretching unnoticed. Both were meditating on Cavendish's connexion with the affair of the forgery. The absence of all answer to Melea's question looked as if he had something to do with the guilty parties; and yet, nothing was more certain than that it is the interest of all bankers, and more especially of unstable ones, to wage war against forgery wherever it may exist.

Fanny thought it best to speak what was in her mind, declaring beforehand that she did so out of no curiosity to know what ought to be concealed, and without any wish for an answer, unless her brother chose to give her one.

Horace was glad she had spoken, since he could assure her that any banker must be as much fool as knave who had any amicable connexion with forgers; and that, if Cavendish had been proved to have maintained any such, he would have been treated in a very different way

from that which was now meditated against him. Fanny also was glad that she had spoken what was in her mind. The charges against Cavendish seemed to be, carelessness in his banking management, and shabby spite against his rivals at D——.

"Now, promise me," said Horace to his sisters, "that you will not fancy that all kinds of horrible disasters are going to happen whenever you see my father and me consulting together without taking you immediately into our counsels. Promise me——"

He stopped short when he saw Melea's eyes full of tears.

"My dear girl," he continued, "I did not mean to hurt you. I did not once think of such a thing as that either Fanny or you could be jealous, or have vanity enough to be offended. I only meant that you were both too easily alarmed in this case, and I should be sorry if the same thing happened again. Do you know, you have scarcely looked me full in the face since I came, and I am not quite sure that you can do so yet."

Melea replied by bestowing on her brother one of her broadest and brightest smiles, which revealed the very spirit of confidence. She had, in turn, her complaint to make; or rather, her explanation to give. How was it possible, she asked, for Fanny and herself to avoid speculating and foreboding, when Horace had not answered above half the questions they put to him, or inquired after half his former acquaintance, or taken

any interest in his old haunts, or in the four-footed or vegetable favourites which had been cherished for his sake during his absence? Fanny also pleaded her mother's anxious looks and long silences during the mornings.

"And now, what fault have you to find with me?" asked Mr. Berkeley. "Have you counted how many times I have said 'Pshaw' within the last week?"

"It would have been much easier to count how many times you have smiled, papa," said Melea, laughing. "But if you would only——" She stopped.

"I know what she would say," continued Horace. "If you would only open your mind to your daughters as far as you can feel it right to do so, it would cause them less pain to know from yourself the worst that can ever happen, than to infer it from your state of spirits; and, indeed, sir, you would find great relief and comfort in it."

"They used to complain of me for telling them sometimes that they must prepare to provide for themselves."

"Not for telling us so, sir. There is nothing but kindness in letting us know as soon as possible, but—"

"But you never knew when to believe me,—is that it? Out with it, Fanny."

"We should like to know the extent of changes, when changes take place, if you have no objection to tell us. We could prepare ourselves so much better then."

"You seem to have been preparing at a vast rate lately, both of you. One at her German and Italian, and the other at her music; and both studying education with might and main."

This was a subject on which Horace could never endure to dwell. He writhed under it, even while he persuaded himself that his father was not in earnest, and that the girls were so far like other girls as to have their heads filled fuller with a new idea than reason could justify. It was not enough that Melea sagely observed that the diligent study which occupied them at present could do them no harm, whatever fortune might be in store for them: he was not quite at his ease till she mentioned Lewis, the East Indian boy who was expected over; and explained how much Fanny and herself wished to contribute towards educating him. All the family desired to keep Lewis at Haleham, and to have him domesticated with them; and if he could be so assisted by his cousins at home as to profit to the utmost by what he should gain at a day-school, it would be much better for every body concerned than that he should be sent to a boarding-school a hundred miles off. This plan accounted for the eagerness of Fanny's study of German; but how Lewis was to benefit by Melea's music was left unexplained.

This evening was the brightest of the whole spring in the eyes of Fanny and Melea. The bank had only sustained a loss, instead of being about to break. There was an end of Mr. Longe, and Horace hinted no intention of quar-

relling with Henry Craig. The sunset was certainly the softest of the year; the violets had never smelled so sweet, and even Mr. Berkeley acknowledged to the daughter on either arm that the rosary which he had planned, and they had tended, was the most delicious retreat he had buried himself in since the days of the green walk in his mother's garden, of which he spoke with fond eloquence whenever led to mention his childhood. To Mrs. Berkeley and her son every thing did not look so surpassingly bright this evening. From them no painful load of apprehension had been suddenly removed; such fears as they had had remained: but it was a May evening, mild and fragrant, and they lingered in the shrubberies till yellow gleams from the drawing-room windows reminded them that they were expected within.

Chapter V.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

Mr. and Mrs. Cavendish were at this time seized with a not unreasonable panic lest they should lose their popularity—and with it, all else that they had. They knew that the inhabitants of a country town are quick in discovering when friendships cool, and mutual confidence abates; and they feared that, when it should be perceived that the rector no longer rode over two or three times a-week to Mr. Berkeley's, and that the two

bankers were now never seen chatting in the street, conjecture might begin to be busy as to the cause of these changes; and they had little hope that their reputation would stand in any instance in which it should be brought into opposition with that of the long resident and much respected Berkeley family. Mrs. Cavendish made the most she could of the intercourse between the ladies of the two households. Wherever she dropped in, she was sure to be in a particular hurry, because she was going to the Berkeleys to show Mrs. Berkeley this, or to tell Miss Berkeley that, or to ask dear Melea the other. From every point of view she was sure to see the Berkeleys going towards her house, and she never went out but she expected to find on her return that they had called. The children were encouraged to watch for every shadow of an invitation, and were not chidden when they gave broad hints that they liked gathering roses in the rosary, and were very fond of strawberries, and very clever at haymaking, and quite used to pluck green pease; or that they wanted flower-seeds, or anything else that could be had within the Berkeleys' gates. They were very frequently invited, as Fanny and Melea liked to give pleasure even to disagreeable children, and would not be deterred from doing so by their disapprobation of the parents, or dislike of the governess. If, however, they let a week slip away without an invitation, on the eighth day a procession was sure to be seen winding up towards the house, viz. Miss Egg, bearing a little basket

or bag, with some pretence of a present,—a cream-cheese, or a dozen smelts fresh from the wherry, or a specimen of some fancy in knitting, or perhaps a quite new German waltz: on either side of Miss Egg, various grades of tippets and bonnets, bespeaking the approach of a large body of strawberry-eaters; and behind, poor Rhoda, toiling on in the heat, with a heavy, crying baby, hanging half over her shoulder, and the pleasant idea in her mind that when she had taught this member of the family to use its legs a little more, and its lungs a little less, it would only be to receive another charge, which would soon grow as heavy, and must inevitably be as fretful. The majority of the party were invariably offended by seeing how Rhoda was the first to be taken care of;—how she was made to sit down in the hall, the baby being taken from her by Melea, and a plate of fruit brought by Fanny, while the other visiters were supposed capable of making their way into the dining-room to pay their respects to Mrs. Berkeley, and talk about the heat and the sweet prospect, till the young ladies should be ready to lead the way into the shrubbery and kitchen-garden. These visits were made the more irksome to the Berkeleys, from the certainty that everything that each of them said would be quoted, with their names at full length, twenty times during the first day; and that every body in Haleham would have heard it before the time for the next meeting should have come round. They were patient, however; too patient and good-natured, as it

soon appeared; for the Cavendishes built upon their kindness to the children a hope that they would visit the parents on terms of seeming intimacy.

Mr. and Mrs. Cavendish agreed, that the present time, while Mr. Berkeley was absent for a few days, when Horace was not likely to appear, and before the affair of the license should come out, afforded a good opportunity for a bold stroke for popularity. Mr. Cavendish had settled a pretty little estate on his wife: their wedding-day approached; and it would be charming to give a rural fête, in the midst of which, and in the presence of everybody in Haleham, this estate should be presented by the fond husband to the gratified wife, the children standing round to witness this moral display of conjugal affection. The idea was charming in every way; for, as it was Mrs. Cavendish's party, it was not supposed possible that Mrs. Berkeley and her daughters could refuse to go, it being conveyed to them that Mr. Longe was at Brighton.

It was, however, found possible for the Berkeleys to refuse, and for many who did not decline the invitation to be unavoidably prevented, by various devised accidents, from attending. The whole thing was a failure; and up to the hour of the poorer part of the company showing themselves, it was undecided whether the scheme should not, after all, change its entire character, and the display be transformed from one of conjugal gallantry to one of rural beneficence. The dinner for the poor folks was boiling in the cop-

pers, and the tables were spread under the trees; and the barn was dressed up for the shopkeepers' sons and daughters to dance in. These two parts of the scheme must go forward. But the marquee, pitched for the higher guests, was too likely to be empty; and there was little pleasure in a man presenting his wife with an estate on her wedding-day, when there were only poor and middling people to look on. Mr. Craig, however, was sure to come, and as sure to relate to the Berkeleys what passed; and certainly it was the sort of thing which must tell well. This consideration decided the matter. The gift was proffered with tenderness, and received with rapture. The husband bestowed the kiss, the wife shed her tears, the children wondered, the people for the most part admired, and those who did not admire, applauded;—all as planned. As he was desired, Mr. Craig delivered Mrs. Cavendish's message of love to the Berkeleys, and of sorrow that their kind hearts should have lost the pleasure of sympathising with her on this happy day. Mr. Craig added, of his own accord, that they might sympathize with her still, if they desired it; the affair being not yet over. He had left the fête early, and gone round by the Berkeleys', on pretence of delivering his message, instead of proceeding straight home.

"How long must we sympathize?" inquired Fanny. "Does she mean to keep up her happiness till twelve o'clock?"

"The dancers will keep up theirs till midnight, I should think," replied Henry. "The barn is

really a pretty sight, and the whole place is well lighted. If you will come with me, Melea, only as far as the gate, you will see the lights between the trees, red and green and purple. It is not often that Haleham has coloured lamps to show."

Melea thanked him, but coloured lights, however pretty on some occasions, were too artificial in a landscape like that seen from the white gate.

"Then, come and admire some that are not coloured. The stars are out overhead, and I never saw the glow-worms so bright."

"Glow-worms! are there glow-worms?" cried Melea. But Mrs. Berkeley wanted to hear more about the fête. She supposed every body was there.

"No, ma'am; nobody."

Fanny here observed, that this was the first time that she had ever known Henry reckon the ladies and gentlemen as everybody. "Who was dancing in the barn," she asked, "if nobody was there?"

"Even that part of the affair was very flat to me," said Henry. "Those that I take the most interest in were either absent or uncomfortable."

"Who? the Martins?"

"I knew beforehand that they went unwillingly, so that it gave me no pleasure to see them there."

"Well: old Enoch Pye—"

"Went away almost before dinner was over, though he was put at the head of one of the tables."

"He went away! and what became of poor

Mrs. Parndon? Did she follow in time to take his arm?"

"She was not there; and I fancy that was the reason of his leaving. I believe a neighbour told him that something had happened to distress her."

"O, what? What has happened?" cried all the ladies, who felt infinitely more sympathy for Mrs. Parndon and Hester than for Mrs. Cavendish.

Henry knew no more than that some sort of bad news had come from London by this day's post. He would learn the next morning what it was, and whether he could be of any service, unless Melea, who was more in the widow's confidence, would undertake the task. Henry was sure that Melea would make the better comforter; and he would come up in the course of the morning, and hear whether his consolations and assistance were wanted. This was readily agreed to, as it was an understood thing that there was no one but her daughter whom Mrs. Parndon loved, and could open her mind to so well as her dear Miss Melea,—always excepting her old friend, Mr. Pye.

Mrs. Parndon was alone, and at work as usual, when Melea entered her little parlour, now no longer dressed up with flowers, as it used to be while Hester lived there. The room could not be without ornament while the drawings of the late Mr. Parndon and his daughter hung against the walls: but, with the exception of these, everything indicated only neatness and thrift.

The floor-cloth looked but a comfortless substitute for a carpet, even in the middle of summer; the hearth-rug, composed of the shreds and snippings from three tailors' boards, disposed in fancy patterns, was the work of the widow's own hands. The window was bare of curtains, the winter ones being brushed and laid by, and the mistress seeing no occasion for muslin hangings, which had been only a fancy of Hester's: so the muslin was taken to make covers for the pictures, and the mirror and the little japanned cabinet, that they might be preserved from the flies in summer, and from the dust of the fires in winter. Even the widow's own footstool, pressed only by parlour shoes, which were guiltless of soil, was cased in canvass. Everything was covered up, but the work-basket, crammed with shirts and worsted stockings, which stood at the mistress's elbow.

She looked up eagerly as the door opened; but a shade of disappointment passed over her countenance when she saw that it was Melea, whom, however, she invited, in a kind but hurried manner, to sit down beside her.

"Now, you must proceed with your work, just as if I was not here," said Melea. The widow immediately went on seaming, observing, that she had indeed a great deal of work on hand.

"As much, I think, as when your son and daughter were in frocks and pinafores, and wearing out their clothes with romping and climbing. Does Hester send down her husband's shirts for you to make and mend?"

"She might, for that matter," replied the widow; "for she is kept very busy at her drawing; but I cannot persuade her to do more than let me work for Philip, who should be no charge on her hands, you know. She lets me make for Philip, but not mend. These things are not his."

Melea's look of inquiry asked whose they were: to which the widow bashfully replied, that Mr. Pye had no one but his washerwoman to see after his linen, and so had been persuaded, as he was very neat and exact, to let an old friend go once a week, and look out what wanted mending. She was sure Melea would think no harm of this.

None in the world, Melea said. It was pleasant to see old friends pay kind offices to one another,—especially two who seemed to be left alone to each other's care, like Mr. Pye and Mrs. Parndon. She did not know what would become of Mr. Pye without Mrs. Parndon, and she had no doubt he did friendly service in his turn. The widow smiled, and shook her head, and observed, that indeed Enoch did need somebody to watch over him. He was growing very deaf, though, poor man, he did not like to allow it; and it was very desirable to have some one at his elbow, to set him right in his little mistakes, and to give customers and strangers a hint to speak up if they wished to have their business properly done.

"It is a pity you cannot carry your work-basket to his counter, these fine mornings, instead of

sitting here for hours all by yourself," observed Melea. "I have no doubt, Mr. Pye would thank you for your company."

Mrs. Parndon had no doubt either; but the thing was quite out of the question. It would be highly improper. What would not all Haleham say, if she began such a practice?

Melea begged pardon, and went on to ask about Hester. She had not been aware that Hester had gone on drawing much since she married.

The widow sighed, and observed, that times were worse for people in Edgar's line of employment than any one would suppose who saw how the farmers were flourishing. The higher some people rose, the lower others fell: as she had good reason to know; and could, therefore, bear testimony that there was now little real prosperity, however some might boast. The Martins, for instance, were growing rich at a mighty rate, and would have laid by quite a little fortune before their lease was out; while she, an economical widow, with what everybody once thought a pretty provision for life, found her income worth less and less every year, just when, for her children's sake, she should like it to be more: and heaven knew she was likely to have use enough for it now. Melea did not venture to ask the meaning of this, or of the heavy sigh which followed. She merely inquired whether Edgar did not retain his situation at the Mint. "O, yes; but salaries were nothing now to what they were; and it was expensive living in London, even though the young people lived in the upper

part of Philip's house, for mutual accommodation; that Philip, poor Philip, might have a respectable-looking, showy shop, and Edgar and his wife have rather less to pay than for a floor in a stranger's house." Melea was very sorry to find that the young people had to think so much about economy: she had hoped that that would never be necessary.

"Why, Miss Melea, young men have expenses; and they don't think so much as their wives about suiting them to the times. And so the wives,—that is, such wives as my Hester,—feel that they should help to fill the purse, if they can. So, she says, she was far from being hurt when Edgar gave her notice, some months ago, that he should wish her to look for employment again, of the same sort that she had before her marriage. The only thing that hurt her was, that it was so long before she could get anything that would pay; for the publishers are overrun with artists, they declare. She would fain have worked for Mr. Pye, as before; but I would not let her say anything about that; nor Philip either: for people here all have the idea of her having made a fine match, (as indeed it is, when one thinks of Edgar,) and it would not look well for her to be taking money from Mr. Pye, as if she was still Hester Parndon."

"O, poor Hester!" thought Melea, who could scarcely restrain her grief at this series of unexpected disclosures. "With an expensive husband, a proud brother, a selfish mother, you are driven

to seek the means of getting money, and thwarted in the seeking! O, poor Hester!"

"She tried at the bazaars," continued Mrs. Parndon; "but most of her beautiful drawings only got soiled and tossed about, till she was obliged to withdraw them; and those that were sold went for less by far than her time was worth. But now she does not want Mr. Pye's help, nor anybody's. She has got into high favour with a bookseller, who publishes children's books for holiday presents, full of pictures. Look! here is the first she did for him; (only, you understand, I don't show it here as hers.) This, you see, was a pretty long job, and a profitable one, she says; and she has so much more to do before the Christmas holidays, that she is quite light of heart about the filling up of her leisure, she tells me. To save her time, I would have had her send me down her husband's making and mending, as I said: but she has many candle-light hours, when she sits up for Edgar, and cannot draw; and she likes to have plenty of needlework to do then, and that nobody should sew for her husband but herself."

"Many candle-light hours in June," thought Melea. "Then, how many will there be of candle-light solitude in winter? O poor Hester!"

"Perhaps her brother spends his evenings with her?" she inquired of the widow.

"Why, one can scarcely say that Philip has any evenings," replied Mrs. Parndon. "Philip was always very steady, you know, and more

fond of his business than anything else. He keeps to it all day, till he is tired, and then goes to bed, at nine in winter, and very little later in summer. Besides, you know, they don't profess to live together, though they are in the same house. Edgar has some high notions, and he would soon put an end to the idea that he and his wife have not their apartments to themselves. —But, is it not strange, Miss Melea, that my son Philip, so uncommonly steady as he is, should have got into trouble? Is it not odd that he, of all people, should be in danger of disgrace?"

Melea did not in her own mind think it at all strange, as his stupidity was full as likely to lead him into trouble as his steadiness to keep him out of it. She waited, however, with a face of great concern, to hear what this threatened disgrace might be.

"You are the only person, Miss Melea, that I have mentioned it to, ever since I heard it yesterday morning, except Mr. Pye, who missed me from the feast yesterday, and kindly came to hear what was the matter, and spent the whole evening with me, till I was really obliged to send him away, and pretend to feel more comfortable than I was, to get him to leave me. But I dare say people are guessing about it, for everybody knew that I meant to be there yesterday, and that it must be something sudden that prevented me; for Mrs. Crane was here, and saw my silk gown laid out ready, before the post came in: and they could hardly think I was ill, the apothe-

cary being there to witness that he had not been sent for. But I thought I would keep the thing to myself for another post, at least, as it may all blow over yet."

Melea looked at her watch, and said she now understood why Mrs. Parndon seemed disappointed at seeing her. She had no doubt taken her knock for the postman's.—O dear, no! it was scarcely post-time yet; but, though Mr Pye had not exactly said that he should look in in the morning, she supposed, when she heard the knock, that it might be he; (she could not get him to walk in without knocking;) and she had prepared to raise her voice a little to him; and she was a little surprised when she found it was not he;—that was all.

But what was the matter? if Melea might ask;—if Mrs. Parndon really wished her to know.

"Why, Miss Melea, nothing more,—Philip has done nothing more than many other people are doing in these days; but it so happens that punishment is to fall upon him more than upon others. A little while ago, Edgar introduced a young man into Philip's shop,—(whether he was a friend of Edgar's, Hester does not say)—telling Philip that he would find it worth while to be liberal in his dealings with this gentleman; and that they might be of great mutual accommodation. Nobody being in the shop, the gentleman, upon Philip's looking willing, produced a bag of guineas to sell."

"But selling guineas is unlawful, is it not?"

"That is the very cause of all this trouble:

but they say there is not a goldsmith in all London that does not buy guineas; so that it is very hard that one should be picked out for punishment. Well; they agreed upon their bargain, Edgar standing by seeing them weighed, and being a witness to the terms. Just before they had quite finished, somebody came into the shop, and the stranger winked at Philip to sweep the guineas out of sight, and whispered that he would call again for the money. It so happened that when he did call again, and was putting the notes he had just taken into his pocket-book, the very same person came in that had interrupted them before. He pretended to want a seal; but there is no doubt that he is a common informer; for it was he who swore the offence against Philip."

"Philip has really been brought to justice, then?"

"O dear, Miss Melea! what an expression for me to hear used about one of my children! Yes; he was brought before the Lord Mayor; but he was allowed to be bailed; and Edgar will move heaven and earth to get him off; as, indeed, he ought to do, he having been the one to lead him into the scrape. I am trusting that the letter I expect to-day may bring news of its having taken some favourable turn."

"If not," said Melea, "you must comfort yourself that the case is no worse. Though Philip has fairly brought this misfortune upon himself by transgressing a law that everybody knows, it is a very different thing to all his

friends from his having incurred punishment for bad moral conduct. The offence of buying and selling guineas is an offence created for the time by the curious state our currency is now in. It is not like any act of intemperance, or violence, or fraud, which will remain a crime long after guineas cease to be bought and sold, and was a crime before guineas were ever coined."

"That is very much the same thing that Mr. Pye said. He tells me not to think of it as I would of coining or forging. Yet they are crimes belonging to the currency too, Miss Melea!"

"They are direct frauds; robberies which are known by those who perpetrate them to be more iniquitous than common robberies, because they not only deprive certain persons of their property, but shake public confidence, which is the necessary safeguard of all property. Buying guineas to make watch-chains of the gold puts the government to the expense of coining more; and this is a great evil; but much blame rests with those who have made gold so valuable as to tempt to this sale of coin, and then punish the tempted. This sort of offence and punishment cannot last long."

"And then my poor son's error will not be remembered against him, I trust. How soon do you suppose this state of things will change, Miss Melea?"

"People say we are to have peace very soon indeed; and presently after, the Bank of England is to pay in cash again; and then gold coin

will cease to be more valuable than it pretends to be."

"So soon as that!" exclaimed Mrs. Parndon, laying down her work.

"Yes. I should not wonder if all temptation to trade in guineas is over within a year."

The widow did not look at all pleased to hear this, anxious as she had seemed for the time when the kind of offence her son had committed should be forgotten.

While she was in a reverie, there was a knock at the door.

"The postman! the postman!" cried Melea, as she ran to open it.

Though it was not the postman, Mrs. Parndon looked far from being disappointed—for it was Mr. Pye.

"Why, now, Mr. Pye," said she; "if you would only have done what I asked you,—come in without knocking,—you would not have put us in a fluster with thinking you were the postman."

Mr. Pye was sorry, looked bashful, but did not promise to open the door for himself next time. He spoke of the heat, pushed back his wig, pulled it on again, but so as to leave his best ear uncovered; and then sat, glancing irresolutely from the one lady to the other, while the widow looked as if waiting to be sympathized with. Finding herself obliged to begin, she said,—

"You may speak before Miss Melea, Mr. Pye. She knows the whole; so you need not keep your feelings to yourself because she is here."

This intimation did not put Enoch at his ease;

while Melea could not help waiting to see what would ensue on this permission to indulge sensibility.

"Have you seen Mr. Craig?" asked Enoch. "I know him to have a message of peace, which may support you while waiting for that which I hope will come in another way. You should hear what a comforter Mr. Craig is!"

Melea was sure Mr. Craig would come as soon as he should know that Mrs. Parndon wished to see him. The widow conveyed, however, that she had been so piously comforted the night before, that she had rather chosen to depend on a renewal from the same source than to send for the clergyman, though, if matters went worse instead of better, she should need all the supports of friendship and religion. And poor Mrs. Parndon's tears began to flow. Enoch could never bear to see this. He walked about the room, returned to take his old friend's hand, tried to speak, and found that his voice would not serve him. Melea began to think she had better be going, when the expected letter arrived.

Instead of opening it, the widow handed it to Mr. Pye, with a sign of request that he would read it first. Such a confidence embarrassed far more than it flattered poor Enoch, whose scrupulosity had never before been so directly invaded. He offered the letter beseechingly to Melea, who, of course, would not receive it; and, at length, finding that the widow's tears went on to flow faster, he took courage to break the seal, put on his glasses, and read. A crow

of delight from him soon told the ladies that the news was good. Melea started up; the widow's handkerchief was lowered, and Enoch cast a wistful look at her over his spectacles, as if wondering whether she was strong enough to bear what he had to impart. A sweet, encouraging smile made him redden all over, and hasten to say that Philip was safe, the whole affair settled, and Edgar the immediate cause of this happy issue.

"But how? Did not he buy the guineas, after all? Was it not against the law? Or, oh! were guineas no longer more valuable than paper?" This last question was asked with considerable trepidation, and answered by Melea's reading the letter, which was as follows:—

"My dear Mother,—I am almost sorry I wrote to you at all yesterday, as my letter must have made you more uneasy than, as it turns out, there was occasion for. It struck my husband, as soon as he had time to think the matter over quietly, that there were a good many light guineas among those that Philip bought. He established the fact so clearly, (having them brought from the very drawer that the informer saw them swept into,) that Philip was discharged without any more difficulty; and the informer is very ill pleased with the turn the affair has taken. You may suppose Philip will use particular care henceforth, knowing that he has this informer for an enemy; and I am afraid the man will be Edgar's enemy too. But it is a great satisfaction, as I hope you will feel, that Edgar has got

him off; and I hope they will both keep clear of any more such dangers. It is near post-time; so I will only add that we suppose nobody need know, down at Halcham, anything about this business, unless it should happen to be in the newspapers; and then, if they should ask, you may be able to make light of it.

"Love from Philip, (who is in his shop as if nothing had happened,) and from your affectionate daughter,

"HESTER MORRISON."

Melea did not understand the case, happy as she was at its termination. What made it more a crime to sell heavy guineas than light ones?

Enoch informed her that a guinea which weighs less than 5 dwts. 8 grs. is not a guinea in law. It may pass for twenty-one shillings, but the law does not acknowledge that it is worth so much.

"I wonder how much Edgar got for such an one," said the widow, "and how much for the heavy ones?"

"The heavy ones sell, under the rose, I understand, for a £1 bank-note, four shillings, and sixpence, while those who thus exchange them for more than a £1 bank-note and one shilling are liable to fine and imprisonment. But a man may sell a light guinea for twenty-four shillings and threepence, and nobody will find fault with him;—a single half grain of deficiency in the weight making the coin nothing better in the eye of the law than so much gold metal."

"Then a light guinea, unworthy to pass, is actually more valuable in a legal way just now

than a heavy one," said Melea. "How very strange! How very absurd it seems!"

"Moreover," observed Enoch, "if you melt a light guinea, you may get from it 5 dwts. 7½ grs. of bullion. But you must not melt heavy guineas,—and each of them will legally exchange for no more than 4 dwts., 14 grs. of gold. So a light guinea is worth, to a person who keeps the law, 17½ grs. of gold more than a heavy one."

"How could they expect my son to keep such law?" sighed the widow,—not for her son, but for her own long-standing mistake in congratulating herself on the good weight of the guineas she had hoarded for many months. It was a sad blow to find, after all, that they had better have been light. She resolved, however, under the immediate pain which Philip had caused her, to keep her coin, in hopes that times would once more turn round, and that, without breaking the law, she might not only get more than a note and a shilling for each heavy guinea, but more than for one despised by the law.

Another knock! It was Henry Craig,—come, partly to see whether he could be of service to Mrs. Parndon, but much more for the purpose of telling Melea that Lewis had arrived, and of walking home with her. He at once took Melea's hint not to seem to suppose that anything was the matter, and to conclude that the widow would be interested in the fact and circumstances of the young East-Indian's unlooked-for arrival. It was not many minutes before

Melea accepted his arm and departed, seeing that Mrs. Parndon was growing fidgetty lest they should outstay Mr. Pye.

"Well," Mrs. Parndon, good morning. I am glad I came to see you just when I did. I shall not forget our conversation."

"Must you go, Miss Melea? and Mr. Craig? Well; I would not think of detaining you, I am sure, with such an attraction as Master Lewis awaiting you at home. It was truly kind of you to stay so long. Pray, Mr. Pye, be so kind as to open the door for Miss Melea. My respects at home, as usual, you know, Miss Melea; and many thanks to you, Mr. Craig, for your goodness in calling. Mr. Pye, pray have the kindness to open the door."

Mr. Pye, not hearing, stood bowing; and Henry Craig was found all-sufficient to open the door. The last glimpse Melea had through it, was of the widow drawing an arm-chair cosily next her own, and patting it with a look of invitation to Mr. Pye. As he was not seen following them by the time they had reached the end of the street, the young folks had no doubt that he had surrendered himself prisoner for another hour.

Chapter VI.

SUSPENSE.

Lewis soon became a more important person in the Berkeley family than any member of it had anticipated, or than it would have been at all good for the boy himself to have known. Anxieties were multiplying; the banking business was in a very doubtful state; and the most sagacious practical men could not pretend to foresee what was likely to follow the transition from a long and burdensome war to peace. The farmers had begun to complain some time before. After several unfavourable seasons, during which they had been growing rich, their fields began to be as productive as they had ever been; and the difficulties in the way of the importation of corn were, about the same time, lessened by the peace; so that the prices of corn fell so rapidly and extensively as to injure the landed interest, and cause ruin to some, and a very general abatement of confidence.

The banks, of course, suffered immediately by this; and there was too much reason to fear that the last days of many were at hand. Bank paper was now at its lowest point of depreciation; the difference between the market-price of gold and the legal value of guineas being thirty per cent.; and there was no prospect of a safe and quiet restoration of paper to the value of gold, by a gradual contraction of its issues on the part of

the Bank of England. If there had been no law to prevent its notes passing at their true value in the market, the Bank would have been warned by what was daily before its eyes to regulate its issues according to the quantity of money wanted. When its notes were at a discount, its issues could have been quietly contracted; or, on the other hand, cautiously enlarged, if its notes should have happened to bear a premium. But this had been put out of the question some time before by the law which ordained bank notes to bear a fixed value in relation to gold; which law was occasioned by the just demand of a great landholder to be paid his rents in an undepreciated currency. If all other parties to a contract had insisted on the same thing, inconvertible bank paper would have been everywhere refused; therefore the law was passed that Bank of England notes must neither be refused in payment, nor taken at less than the value they professed to bear. This law encouraged the Bank to put out more notes than could safely circulate; and so one evil brought on another,—all of which might be traced back to the Restriction Act, but whose results it was not so easy to anticipate.

That the Bank and the Government were aware of the decrease in the value of their paper, was evident by their sending it abroad whenever a favourable opportunity offered for passing large quantities of it in distant places, where it was not expected that people would be too curious about its value. The Irish proved impracticable.

They were too near home, and knew very well what ought to be thought of Bank of England paper in comparison with guineas, which were openly bought and sold, till the law above referred to was extended to that country. The Canadians were tried next, bundles of paper-money being sent out to pay the army, and everybody else with whom Government had to do. But, instead of taking them quietly, as Englishmen were compelled to do, they consulted together upon the notes, appraised them, and used them in exchange at a discount of thirty per cent. This being the case in any part of the world, was enough to render any other part of the world discontented with bank paper; and set the people in England looking about them to see how many banks they had, and what was the foundation of their credit. There was little comfort in the discovery that, while scarcely any gold was forthcoming, the number of banks had increased, since Bank of England notes had been rendered inconvertible, from about 280 to above 700; and that a great many of these were watching the fortunes of the farming interest with a nervous anxiety which did not tell at all well for their own.

Mr. Berkeley now never missed going to D—— on market days; and the girls found themselves more interested than they could once have conceived possible in the accounts Henry Craig brought them of what was said of the state of the times in the farm-houses he visited, and by Mr. Martin when he returned from

making his sales in the county. It appeared that there was quite as much speculation abroad respecting the stability of the banks as about the supply of corn; and the bank at D—— and Mr. Cavendish's concern did not, 'of course, escape remark.

Mr. Cavendish had, to Horace's surprise, got over his difficulties about the license. He had quietly paid the fines, and gone on; being observed, however, to undersell more and more, and drive his business more quickly and eagerly every day; so as to afford grounds of suspicion to some wise observers that he was coming to an end of his resources. It was impossible but that he must be carrying on his business at a tremendous loss, and that a crash must therefore be coming. —Mr. Berkeley's disapprobation and dislike of this man and his doings grew into something very like hatred as times became darker. He knew that Cavendish's failure must cause a tremendous run on the D—— bank; and these were not days when bankers could contemplate a panic with any degree of assurance. As often as he saw lighters coming and going, or stacks of deals being unbuilt, or coals carted on Cavendish's premises, he came home gloomy or pettish; and yet, as Melea sometimes ventured to tell him, the case would be still worse if there was nothing stirring there. If busy, Cavendish must be plunging himself deeper in liabilities; if idle, his resources must be failing him: so, as both aspects of his affairs must be dismal, the wisest thing was to fret as little as possible about either.

—These were the times when Lewis's presence was found to be a great comfort. His uncle was proud of him,—his aunt fond of him; the occupation of teaching him was pleasant and useful to his cousins; and there was endless amusement to them all in the incidents and conversations which arose from his foreign birth and rearing. None of them could at present foresee how much more important a comfort this little lad would soon be.

Rather late in the autumn of this year, Fanny left home for a week to pay a long-promised visit to a friend who lived in the country, ten miles from Haleham. This promise being fulfilled, she and Melea and Lewis were to settle down at home for a winter of diligent study, and of strenuous exertion to make their own fire-side as cheerful as possible to the drooping spirits of their father and mother. If they could but get over this one winter, all would be well; for Mr. Berkeley had laid his plans for withdrawing from the bank at Midsummer; preferring a retreat with considerable loss to the feverish anxiety under which he was at present suffering. His pride was much hurt at his grand expectations of his banking achievements having come to this; but his family, one and all, soothed him with reasonings on the sufficiency of what he expected to have remaining, and with assurances that his peace of mind was the only matter of concern to them. He believed all they said at the time; but present impressions were too much for him when he was at business; and whatever might be his mood

when his daughters parted from him at the gate in the morning, it was invariably found, when he came back to dinner, that he had left his philosophy somewhere in the road, and was grievously in want of a fresh supply. Mrs. Berkeley already began to count the months till Midsummer; and Melea's eyes were full of tears when Fanny was mounting her horse for her little journey. Melea did not think she could have so dreaded one week of her sister's absence.

The first day passed pretty comfortably, no news having arrived of the stoppage of any bank in town or country, and nothing reaching the ears of the Berkeleys respecting any transactions of the Cavendishes. On the next, Lewis, who had been amusing himself with sweeping away the dead leaves to make a clear path for his uncle up to the house, came running in, broom in hand, to announce that Mr. Berkeley was coming, full gallop, by the field way from D——. Before Mrs. Berkeley knew what to make of this strange news, her husband burst in, in a state of nervous agitation from head to foot.

"What *is* the matter?" cried everybody.

"Lewis, go and finish your sweeping," said his uncle, upon which the dismayed boy was withdrawing.—"Lewis, come back," was the next order, "and stay with your aunt all day. Have nothing to say to the servants."

"The bank has failed?" said Melea, inquiringly.

"No, my dear; but there is a run upon it, and to-morrow is market-day. I must be off to

town instantly; but no one must see the least sign of alarm.—Get on your habit, Melea. Your horse will be at the door in another minute."

"Mine, father!"

"Yes. We go out for our ride;—leisurely, you know, leisurely, till we are past Cavendish's, and out of sight of the town; and then for a gallop after the mail. I think I may overtake it."

When Melea came down, dressed in a shorter time than ever horsewoman was dressed before, her mother had stuffed a shirt and night-cap into Mr. Berkeley's pocket, replenished his purse, promised to be at D—— to meet him on his return from town in the middle of the next day, and summoned a smile of hope and a few words of comfort with which to dismiss him.

The groom was ordered to fall back out of earshot; and during the tedious half mile that they were obliged to go slowly, Melea learned a few particulars. She asked the nature of the alarm, and whether the old story of the forgeries had anything to do with it.

"Nothing whatever. It is pure accident. The most provoking thing in the world! The merest accident!"

"People's minds are in a state to be acted upon by trifles," observed Melea. "I hope it may soon blow over, if it is not a well-founded alarm."

"No, no. Such a hubbub as I left behind me is easy enough to begin, but the devil knows where it will end. It was that cursed fool, Mrs. Millar, that is the cause of all this."

"What! Mrs. Millar the confectioner?"

"The same,—the mischievous, damned old—"

The rest was lost between his teeth. Melea had never thought Mrs. Millar a fool, or mischievous, and knew she was not old, and had no reason for supposing the remaining word to be more applicable than the others. Perceiving, however, that they were just coming in sight of Cavendish's premises, she supposed that her father's wrath might bear a relation to them, while he vented it on the harmless Mrs. Millar. He went on:—

"A servant boy was sent to Mrs. Millar's for change for a £5 note of our bank; and the devil took him there just when the shop was full of people, eating their buns and tarts for luncheon. The fool behind the counter—".

"And who was that?"

"Why, who should it be but Mrs. Millar?—never looked properly at the note, and gave the boy a pound's worth of silver. When he showed her that it was a five, she took it up between her hands, and with her cursed solemn face said, 'Oh, I can't change *that* note.' The boy carried home the story; the people in the shop looked at one another; and the stupid woman went on serving her buns, actually the only person that did not find out what a commotion she had begun. The bun-eaters all made a circuit by our bank in their walk, and one of them came in and gave us warning; but it was too late. In half an hour, the place was besieged, and to avoid being observed, I had to

make my way out through Taylor's garden at the back."

"Poor Mrs. Millar!" said Melea. "I am as sorry for her as for anybody."

"O, you never saw any one in such a taking —as she deserves to be. She came, without her bonnet, into the middle of the crowd, explaining and protesting, and all that; with not a soul to mind what she said now, though they were ready enough to snap up her words an hour before. She caught a glimpse of me, when she had made her way up the steps, and she actually went down on her knees to ask me to forgive her; but I swore I never would."

"O father!" cried Melea, more troubled than she had yet been. At the moment, she received a signal to look as usual while the Broadhursts' carriage passed, but on no account to stop to speak. Whether her father, with his twitching countenance, could look as usual, was Melea's doubt. Doubting it himself, he teazed his horse, and made it bolt past the carriage on one side, while his daughter saluted the Broadhursts on the other.

"Well carried off, child!" he cried.

"Take care, Sir. They are looking after us."

"Aye; pronouncing me a wonderful horseman for my years, I dare say; but I must put that matter to the proof a little more before I get quietly seated in the mail.—Well; I may be off now, I think; and here we part. God bless you, my dear! Thank God we have not met Cavendish or any of his tribe! I should have

rode over the children, depend upon it. Farewell, my love!"

"Not yet," said Melea, settling herself as if for a feat. "I can gallop as well as you, and I must see you into the mail,—for my mother's sake."

"You will soon have had enough; and when you have, turn without speaking to me. George, follow your mistress, and never mind me, or where I take it into my head to go. Now for it!"

The gallop lasted till George wondered whether master and young mistress were not both out of their right minds. At length, the mail was seen steadily clearing a long reach of hill before them. George was shouted to to ride on and stop it; a service which he could scarcely guess how he was to perform, as it had been all he could do to keep up with his charge for the last four miles. The mail disappeared over the ridge before the panting horses had toiled half way up the long hill; but it was recovered at the top, and at last overtaken, and found to have just one place vacant inside. Mr. Berkeley made time for another word.

"I charge you, Melea, to let Fanny know nothing of this. Not a syllable, mind, by message or letter, before she comes home. Time enough then."

Remonstrance was impossible; but Melea was much grieved. She mourned over the prohibition all the way home; but she was particularly glad that Henry had not been mentioned. She was

sure her mother would desire that he should come to them, and help them to support one another during the inevitable suspense, and the misfortunes which might follow.

When Melea reached home, she found her mother preparing to set off for D——, where (as the run would probably continue for some days, requiring the presence of all the partners) it was her intention to take a lodging, in order that the few hours of rest which her husband would be able to snatch might be more undisturbed than they could be in a friend's house. Melea begged hard that Mrs. Millar might be allowed to accommodate them, in sign of forgiveness and regard; and as her dwelling was conveniently placed with respect to the bank, and she was known to have everything comfortable about her, Mrs. Berkeley had no objection to make the first application to the grieved and penitent cause of all this mischief.

Melea and Lewis must stay at home. Painful as it was to separate at such a time, the effort must be made; for, besides that it was better for Mr. Berkeley to have no one with him but his wife, it was necessary that no difference in the proceedings of the family should be perceived in Halcham. The house must be seen to be open, the family on the spot, and all going on, as nearly as possible, in the common way.—The mother and daughter did not attempt to flatter each other that all would end well. They were both too ignorant of the extent of the alarm, as well as of the resources of the bank, to pretend to judge.

They were firm, composed, and thoughtful; but self-possession was the best thing they at present wished and hoped for. When the silent parting kiss had been given, and the sound of wheels died away in the dusk, Melea sank down on the sofa, and remained motionless for a time which appeared endless to poor Lewis. He stood at the window, looking out, long after it was too dark to see anything. He wished Melea would bid him ring for lights. He was afraid the fire was going out, but he did not like to stir it while Melea had her eyes fixed upon it. He could not steal out of the room for his slate, because he had been bidden to stay where he was for the rest of the day. When he was too tired and uneasy to stand at the window any longer, he crept to the hearth-rug, and laid himself down on his face at full length.

Melea started up, stirred the fire into a blaze, and sat down beside Lewis, stroking his head, and asking him whether he thought he could be happy for a few days with only herself to be his companion after school hours; and whether he could keep the secret of his aunt's absence, and of his uncle's not coming home to dinner as usual. While Lewis was conscientiously measuring his own discretion, patience, and fortitude, previous to giving his answer, Mr. Craig was shown in.

Henry did not come in consequence of any alarm, as Melea saw by the lightness of his step and the gaiety of his manner of entering the room. He presently stopped short, however, on

seeing only two of the family, sitting by firelight, at an hour when music and merry voices were usually to be heard in the bright, busy room. "Is any body ill?" "What then is the matter?" were questions which led to a full explanation.—Henry was very sorry that Fanny could not be sent for. He thought the prohibition wrong; but, as it existed, there was nothing to be done but to obey it. He would, however, do all he could to supply Fanny's place to Melea. After a long consultation about matters of minor moment, the most ample review of past circumstances, and the steadiest mutual contemplation of what might be in prospect, the friends parted,—Henry uncertain whether there was most joy or sorrow in his full heart,—(joy in Melea, and sorrow for this trial,)—and Melea relying upon the support that his promised visits would afford her. She would see him, he had told her, two or three times a day while the suspense lasted; and he should not set foot out of Haleham while there was a chance of her sending him notice that he could be of the slightest service.

Chapter VII.

CERTAINTY.

Mrs. Millar was only too happy in being permitted to atone, by her most devoted attentions, for the evil she had caused by an expression, inadvertently dropped and completely misunder-

stood. Her lodgings happened to be empty; but, if they had not been so, she would have given up her own sitting-room, and all the accommodation her house could afford, to secure to Mr. Berkeley the repose he would so much want, after the fatigues he was undergoing. She left the shop to the care of her servants while she herself assisted Mrs. Berkeley in the needful preparations for Mr. Berkeley's comfort, on his return from his journey; a return which was made known by strangers before the anxious wife heard of it from himself.

The streets of D—— were full of bustle from an hour before the bank opened in the morning. News was brought by customers into Mrs. Millar's shop of expresses which had been seen going and returning, it was supposed, from the other banks which must necessarily be expecting a run. Everybody had something to tell;—what a prodigious quantity of gold and silver there was in large wooden bowls on the bank-counter; how such and such a carrier had left the market early to elbow his way into the bank, and demand cash, being afraid to carry home notes to his employer; how there was no use in going to market without change, as a note might travel the whole round of butchers' stalls without finding a hand to take it; how some of the folks would receive Bank of England notes, and others would be content with nothing short of gold. There were many laughs about the ignorance of certain of the country people respecting the causes and nature of the panic; of the young

woman who carried Bank of England notes to be changed for those of the D—— bank; of the old woman who was in a hurry to get rid of her guineas for notes, because she was told the guinea-bank was in danger; and of the market-gardener who gladly presented a note of a bank which had failed a year before, expecting to get cash for it. Later in the day, remarks were heard on the civility and cheerfulness of the young gentleman, the son of one of the partners, just arrived from London, it was said, and who seemed to understand the thing very well, and to be quite easy about everybody having his own. With these were coupled criticisms on the young gentleman's father, who was fidgetting about, trying to joke with the country people, but as cross as could be between times: to which somebody answered that he might well be cross when an old friend and business connexion, from whom he might have expected some consideration and gratitude, had sent his porter with two 10*l.* and one 5*l.* note to be cashed. No wonder Mr. Berkeley said, loud enough for everybody to hear, that Mr. Briggs ought to be ashamed of himself: for it was true that he ought.—A new comer explained that Mr. Briggs had nothing to do with it; and that he had, on learning what a liberty his porter had taken with his name, sent a note to Mr. Berkeley, explaining that he had issued strict orders to all his people, early that morning, not to go near the bank the whole day; and that the porter was dismissed his service, and might obtain employment, if he could, from the persons

who had no doubt sent him to get change for their notes, because they did not choose to appear in the matter themselves.

From the moment that Mrs. Berkeley heard of the arrival of her husband and son, she endeavoured to persuade herself that all would be well, and that the great danger was over, since the bank did not stop before supplies could be obtained from town. She sat by the window, and counted the hours till six o'clock, the time when the bank usually closed. Half-past six came, and the street appeared fuller of bustle than even in the morning; a circumstance which she could not understand, till Mrs. Millar came up to tell her that the bank was kept open an hour later than usual. This looked well, and did more to compose the anxious wife than all the slips of paper she had had from her husband during the afternoon, each of which assured her that there was no cause for uneasiness. As her spirits were thus somewhat raised, it was a grievous disappointment to see her husband come in with a miserable countenance, and even Horace looking more grave than she had ever seen him.

"And now, Horace, no more pretence," said Mr. Berkeley when he had sunk down on a sofa, apparently transformed by the events of the last twenty-four hours into a feeble old man. "We have been hypocritical enough all day; now let us look as wretched as we are."

"Some tea, mother," said Horace. "My father's hard day's work is done; but I must go back to the bank, and possibly to London. They

keep us terribly short of gold. We must get more out of them before noon to-morrow, or I do not know what may have become of us by this time in the evening."

Mrs. Berkeley began to protest against the cruelty of stinting the supplies of gold at such a time.

"They cannot help it, mother," replied Horace. "They are hourly expecting a run themselves—"

"A run on the London banks! Where will all this end?" Horace shook his head. He then observed, that if they could get through the next day, he should be tolerably easy, as it was not probable that the mistrust of the people would outlast a well-sustained run of two days and a half. If they had none but small amounts to pay, he should have little fear;—if it was certain that no more rich customers would come driving up in carriages to take away their seven thousand pounds in a lump.

Why, who could have done that? Mrs. Berkeley inquired.

"Who!" said her husband. "Who should it be but the sister of that fellow Longe! There he was with her in the carriage, grinning and kissing his hand when he caught a glimpse of me within. It was his doing, I'll answer for it. He would not let pass such an opportunity of annoying us."

"The sister is evidently an ignorant person, who does not perceive the mischief she is doing," observed Horace. "I should not wonder if it strikes her, and she brings her seven heavy bags back again to-morrow."

"Then she may carry them away a second time," said Mr. Berkeley. "I am longing to write to tell her, when this bustle is over, that we have closed accounts with her for ever."

Horace wished they might be justified in spurning the seven thousands the next day. Nobody would enjoy the rejection more than himself, if they could safely make it; but seven thousand pounds would go a good way in paying small demands."

"I suppose your bank is solvent?" timidly asked Mrs. Berkeley. "You are quite sure of this, I hope."

Before there was time for an answer, the door was jerked open; and Mr. Cavendish appeared, nursing his white hat, and apologising for the rudeness of finding his own way up stairs, against the will of Mrs. Millar, who was not aware what an intimate friend he was, and how impossible it was to him to keep away from the Berkeleys at such a time.

Horace made a rapid sign to his father to command himself, and then coolly took a cup of tea from his mother, sugaring it with great exactness, and leaving it to Mr. Cavendish to begin the conversation. Mr. Berkeley saw the necessity of behaving well, and kept quiet also.

"I hope you enjoy your sofa, Sir," observed Cavendish. "It must be very acceptable, after having been on your legs all day."

At another time, Mr. Berkeley might have criticised the grammar; but he now vented his critical spleen on the accommodations at the bank.

"By the way, Horace," said he, "there's a confounded draught from under those doors. One does not mind it in common; and I have really forgotten it since last winter, till to-day. But the eternal opening and shutting of the outer door caused a perpetual stream of air, going and returning. It is that which has made my ancles ache so to-night."

"And the fatigue, no doubt," added Cavendish. "You must have had a very busy,—an extremely harassing day, Sir."

"Very indeed, and,"—yawning,—"as we are likely to have just such another to-morrow, I must go to bed presently. It is a great comfort, (for which I am obliged to my wife,) that I have not to ride as far as you have to-night, or to be up particularly early in the morning. We shall open an hour earlier than usual, but this leaves time enough for sleep, even to lazy folks like me."

"An hour earlier! Indeed! Well, Sir, I hope you will sleep sound, I am sure."

"It will be odd if I do not," said Mr. Berkeley, yawning again. Mr. Cavendish proceeded,—

"I trust, Sir, you support yourself pretty well. There is something so harassing in a bustle of this nature; so provoking;—so, if I may say so, exasperating! I hope this has no effect upon you;—you keep yourself calm,—you——"

"I, Sir! Lord bless you, I am as cool as a cucumber." Seeing an exchange of glances between Horace and Mrs. Berkeley, he went on, "There was I behind the counter, you know. That was my place."

"True: so I understood."

"Behind the counter, where I could talk with the country people as they came in; and, upon my soul, I never heard any thing so amusing. To hear what they expected, and how they had been bamboozled! To see what a hurry they were in to squeeze their way up to the counter, and, after talking a minute or two, and handling their gold, how they thought the notes were more convenient to carry, after all; and they would have them back again, with many apologies for the trouble they had given us."

"Ha! ha! very good. Apologies indeed! They ought to apologise, I think. And do you, really now, open accounts again with them?"

"With such as knew no better, and will know better another time; but not with any who ought to keep ten miles off on such a day as this, and come clamouring for their five or seven thousand guineas."

"Is it possible? You don't say so!"

"I do, though. And they may go and seek a beggarly banker who cares more for their trumpery bags than we do. We will not blister our fingers any more with their cursed gold. We will teach them——"

"No more tea, thank you, mother," said Horace, rising and buttoning up his coat. "Mr. Cavendish, will you walk? I have just to go down the street, and it is time we were leaving my father to rest himself, which, as you observe, he needs."

"With pleasure, Mr. Horace; but I have first

a little matter to speak about,—a little suggestion to make,—and I am glad, I am sure, that you are here to give us the benefit of your opinion. It occurs to me, you see, that one friend should help another, at a time of need. There is no knowing, you perceive, what may happen in these extraordinary times to any of us,—bankers especially. Even I myself may be in a condition to be glad of the credit of my friends."

"Very probably," observed Mr. Berkeley.

"Well, then, my dear sir, allow me to make use of my credit on your behalf. It will give me the greatest pleasure to bring you through."

Though Mr. Berkeley looked as if he would have devoured him on the spot, Cavendish went on pressing his offers of service, of patronage, of support, and ended with a pretty broad hint that he would take charge of Mr. Berkeley's estate on condition of raising the funds needful at present. In the midst of his rage, Mr. Berkeley was for a moment disposed to take him at his word, for the amusement of seeing how Cavendish would contrive to back out of a bargain which all parties were equally aware he could not fulfil; but having just discretion enough to see the mischief which such a joke must bring after it, he adopted a different air; bowed his haughtiest bow, was very sensible of Mr. Cavendish's motives, would ask for the patronage of the Haleham bank when he needed it, and was, meanwhile, Mr. Cavendish's very humble servant.

When Horace and the tormentor were gone,

and Mr. Berkeley had vented his spleen against the impudent upstart, the coxcomb, the swindler, and whatever pretty terms besides he could apply to Cavendish, Mrs. Berkeley obtained some account of the events of the day, and was glad to find that there were instances of generosity and delicacy to set against the examples of Mr. Longe's sister and of Cavendish. A merchant had appeared at the counter to pay in a large sum; and a servant-maid, who had nursed Miss Melea, came to the bank in search of her husband, and carried him off without the change he went to seek. These, and a few other heroes and heroines, furnished Mr. Berkeley with subjects for as vehement praise as others of blame; and he retired to his chamber at war with not much more than half his race.

The most urgent messages and incessant personal applications failed to procure such a supply of gold from the corresponding bank in London as would satisfy the partners of the D—— bank of their ability to meet the run, if it should continue for some days. It did so continue; relaxing a little on the third day, becoming terrific on the fourth, and obliging the partners to hold a midnight consultation, whether they should venture to open their doors on the fifth. The bank did not this day remain open an hour after the usual time: it was cleared almost before the clock struck six; and though some of the people outside were considerate enough to remember that the clerks and partners must all be weary, after so many days of unusual toil, and that this was

reason enough for the early closing of the shutters, there were others to shake their heads, and fear that the coffers were at length emptied of their gold.

For the first two hours in the morning, the partners congratulated themselves on their resolution to take the chance of another day. The tide was turned: people were ashamed of their panic, and gold flowed in. A note to say this was sent to Mrs. Berkeley, who immediately began her preparations for returning home before night. The messenger, who went to and fro between D—— and Halcham, was charged with good news for Melea; and all seemed happy again, when the fearful tidings arrived that the corresponding banking-house in London was exposed to a tremendous run, and required all the assistance it could obtain, instead of being in any condition to send further funds to its country correspondent.

All attempts to keep this intelligence secret were vain. Within an hour, everybody in D—— had heard it, and it was impossible to obviate the effects of the renewed panic. The partners did not defer the evil moment till their coffers were completely emptied. As soon as the tide had once more turned, and gold began to flow out a second time, they closed their bank, and issued a notice of their having stopped payment.

Horace was the main support of his family at this crisis. When he had communicated the intelligence to his mother, silenced the lamentations of the miserable Mrs. Millar, and brought his

father home to his lodging after dusk, he went over to Haleham for an hour or two, to give such poor satisfaction to his sisters as might be derived from full and correct intelligence. Fanny had not yet returned; and as she was not there, with her matured and calm mind, and greater experience of life, to support her young sister under this blow, Horace could scarcely bring himself to communicate to his little Melea tidings so completely the reverse of those which she evidently expected. Though many years younger, Melea was not, however, a whit behind her sister in strength of mind. She also understood more of the nature of the case than her brother had supposed possible; so that she was capable of as much consolation as could arise from a full explanation of the state and prospects of the concern, and of the family fortunes as connected with it.

Melea would have inquired into all these circumstances if only for the sake of the relief which it appeared to afford to Horace to fix his attention upon them; but she was also anxious to qualify herself to satisfy Fanny in every particular, on her return the next day: for her brother brought a message from Mrs. Berkeley, requesting that Melea would not think of joining her parents at D——, but would stay to receive Fanny, and to prepare for the return of the rest of the family, whenever Mr. Berkeley might feel himself justified in seeking the retirement of his own house.

"Is there anything else that I can do?" asked

Melea. "Any letters to write,—any inventories to make out?" she continued, casting a glance round her at the bookshelves, the piano, and the Titian which had long been her father's pride. "Anything which can best be done before my mother comes home?"

"If you think, dear, that you can write letters without too much effort, it would be very well that three or four should be dispatched before my mother returns. There is no occasion for anything more, at present. Be careful, Melea, about making too much effort. That is the only thing I fear for you. Remember that you must reserve your strength for our poor father's support. He will need all you can afford him; and we must expect even my mother to give way when he no longer depends wholly on her. Do not exhaust yourself at once, dearest."

Melea could not realize the idea of her being exhausted, though she made no protestations about it. She supposed that there might be something much worse in such a trial than she could at present foresee, and she therefore refrained from any talk of courage, even to herself; but, at present, she did not feel that she had anything to bear, so insignificant did her relation to the event appear in comparison with that which was borne by her parents and brother. She was full of dread on her father's account, of respectful sorrow for her mother, and of heart-wringing grief for her manly, honourable brother, to whom reputation was precious above all things, and who was just setting out in life with

confident hopes of whatever might be achieved by exertion and integrity. For Horace she felt most; for Fanny and herself least: for Fanny, because she was another self in her views of life, in capacity for exertion, and in preparation for that reverse of fortune with which they had occasionally been threatened from the days of their childhood.

"Can I do nothing for you, Horace?" asked Melea. "While we are all looking to you, we should like to think we could help you. Is there nothing to be done?"

"Nothing, thank you. Whatever responsibility rests upon me cannot be shared. Only make me the bearer of some message to my mother, and of any little thing you can think of to show her that you are calm and thoughtful. Such a proof will be better than anything I can say."

"I am going to write while you eat these grapes," said Melea, who had observed that her brother was teazed with thirst. While Horace ate his grapes, and made memoranda, Melea wrote to her mother.

"Dearest Mother,—The news which Horace has brought grieves me very much. My great trouble is that I am afraid Fanny and I know too little at present what will be the extent of such a trial to feel for my father and you as we ought. We are aware, however, that it must be very great and long-continued to one who, like my father, has toiled through a life-time to obtain the very reverse of the lot which is now appointed to him.

There is no dishonour, however, and that, I think, is the only calamity which we should find it very difficult to bear. Your children will feel it no misfortune to be impelled to the new and more reponsible kind of exertion of which their father has kindly given them frequent warning, and for which you have so directed their education as to prepare them. Fanny and I are too well convinced that the greatest happiness is to be found in strenuous exertion on a lofty principle, to repine at any event which makes such exertion necessary, or to dread the discipline which must, I suppose, accompany it. I speak for Fanny in her absence as for myself, because I have learned from her to feel as I do, and am sure that I may answer for her; and I have written so much about ourselves, because I believe my father in what he has so often said,—that it is for our sakes that he is anxious about his worldly concerns. I assure you we shall be anxious only for him and you and Horace. Horace, however, can never be long depressed by circumstances; nor do I think that any of us can. I mean to say this in the spirit of faith, not of presumption. If it is presumption, it will certainly be humbled: if it is faith, it will, I trust, be justified. In either case, welcome the test!

"I expect Fanny home by the middle of the day to-morrow; and I hope we shall see you in the evening, or the next day at farthest. My father may rely on perfect freedom from disturbance. I shall provide that nobody shall come farther than the white gate, unless he wishes it.

I send you some grapes, and my father's cloth shoes, which I think he must want if he has to sit still much at his writing. I shall send you more fruit to-morrow; and the messenger will wait for any directions you may have to give, and for the line which I am sure you will write, if you should not be coming home in the evening.

"Lewis, who has been a very good and pleasant companion, sends his love, and his sorrow that anything has arisen to make you unhappy.

"Farewell, my dear father and mother. May God support you, and bring blessings out of the misfortune with which He has seen fit to visit you! With His permission, your children shall make you happy yet.—Your dutiful and affectionate daughter,

"MELEA BERKELEY.

"P.S.—No one has been so anxious about you as Henry Craig. If he thought it would be any comfort to you to see him, he would go over to D—— on the instant. He said so when we were only in fear. I am sure he will now be more earnest still. As soon as Horace is gone, I shall write, as he desires, to Reading, and Manchester, and Richmond. If there are any more, let me know to-morrow. I hope you will not exert yourself to write to anybody at present, except Fanny or me."

When Fanny turned her face homewards the next morning, ignorant (as it grieved her sister to think) of all that had happened during the week, she was charged by the friends she was leaving with two or three commissions, which

she was to execute on her way home through Haleham, in order that the servant who attended her might carry back her purchases. She accordingly alighted from her horse at the entrance of the town, in order to walk to some shops. The first person she met was Mr. Longe, walking arm-in-arm with a young man, whom she did not know. She saw a significant sign and whisper pass between them, such as she had observed on sundry occasions of meeting the rector since her rejection of him; but she was not the less taken by surprise with the rudeness which followed. Of the two gentlemen, one—the stranger—took up his glass to stare, the other gave no sign of recognition but a laugh in her face; and both resolutely turned her off the narrow pavement,—looking back, as the servant declared, as if to find out what she thought of the manœuvre. She thought nothing but that it was very contemptible, till she saw Henry Craig coming towards her in great haste, and beckoning as she was about to enter the shop.

"Let me help you upon your horse, Miss Berkeley," said he, much out of breath from haste or some other cause.

"Thank you; but I must go to a shop first. Have you seen my family this morning? And how are they all?"

Henry answered that they were all well; that he was going there with her now; and that he wished she would dismiss the groom, with the horses, and walk with him by the field way. Fanny was about to object, but she saw that

Henry was earnest, and knew that he was never so without cause. She let him give such orders to the servant as he thought fit, draw her arm within his own, and turn towards the field-path. When she looked up in his face, as if wishing him to speak, she saw that he was pale and agitated. She stopped, asking him so firmly what was the matter, that he gave over all idea of breaking the intelligence gradually.

"It is said," he replied,—"but I do not know that it is true,—it is said that there is some derangement in your father's affairs,—that the D—— bank has stopped payment."

"You do not know that it is true?"

"Not to this extent. I know that there has been some doubt,—that there have been difficulties during the last week; but of the event I have no certain knowledge. Alarm yourself as little as you can."

"I have no doubt it is true," replied Fanny. "Such an event is no new idea to us. I have no doubt it is true." And they walked on in silence.

"One thing, Henry, I must say before I know more," continued Fanny, after a long pause. "Let what will have happened, I am certain that the honour of my father and brother will come out clear. If it were not for this confidence in them——"

"And I," said Mr. Craig, "am equally certain that there will be but one opinion among all who have ever known you;—that no family could have less deserved such a reverse, or could be more fitted to bear it well. No family——"

He could not go on. When he next spoke, it was to tell her that her parents were absent, and to give her a brief account of the events of the week, as far as he knew them; that is, up to the previous afternoon.

"You have not seen Melea or Lewis to-day, then? Not since they heard the news?"

"No. I left Melea cheered,—indeed relieved from all anxiety, yesterday afternoon, and did not hear till this morning the report of a reverse. I have not ventured to go, knowing that she would probably be fully occupied, and that you would be with her early to-day. I did walk up as far as the gate; but I thought I had better meet you, and prevent your going where you might hear it accidentally. I sent in a note to Melea, to tell her that I should do so."

"Come in with me," said Fanny, when they had reached the gate, "you know you will be wretched till you have heard what the truth is. You must come in and be satisfied, and then you can go away directly."

Melea heard their steps on the gravel, and appeared at the parlour-door when they entered the hall. She looked with some uncertainty from the one to the other, when the sisterly embrace was over.

"Now, love, tell me how much is true," said Fanny. "We know there is something. Tell us what is the matter!"

"Nothing that will take you by surprise. Nothing that will make you so unhappy as we used to imagine we must be in such a case. In-

deed, we could not have imagined how much hope, how many alleviations there would be already. I have had *such* a letter from my mother this morning! Very few will suffer, she hopes, but those who are best able to lose; and even they only for a short time. They have great hopes that everything will be paid. And such generosity and consideration they have met with! And everybody seems to honour Horace. I had no idea he could have been so appreciated."

"And when may we be all together again?"

"My father cannot come home for two or three days yet; and my mother thinks it will be better to reserve our society for him till he settles down here. Indeed he is too busy to be much even with her."

"I wonder what we ought to do next," said Fanny.

"I will tell you," replied Melea, "all I know about the affairs, and then you will be better able to judge. Nay, Henry, stay and listen. If all this was a secret, I should not have known it. You must not go till you have heard from us what anybody in Haleham could tell you before night."

And she gave a brief and clear account of the general aspect of the affairs, as viewed by Horace. It was certainly very encouraging as to the prospect of every creditor being ultimately paid.

"If that can but be accomplished!" said Fanny. "Now, Melea, now the time is come that we have talked of so often. Now is the

time for you and me to try to achieve a truer independence than that we have lost. I have a strong confidence, Melea, that energy, with such other qualifications as our parents have secured to us, will always find scope, and the kind of reward that we must now seek. We will try."

Henry Craig started up, feeling that he was more likely to need comfort than to give it. He bestowed his blessing, and hurried away.

There was little for the sisters to do previous to Mr. and Mrs. Berkeley's return. Melea had already taken measures to prevent a situation as governess—in which she believed her services would be acceptable, and which offered many advantages—from being filled up: though without mentioning the name, or committing herself till she should have consulted her family. She had been at a loss about what to say to the servants, one of whom seemed, through her long service, to be entitled to confidence, while the others could not, she thought, be trusted to behave well upon it. Fanny had no doubt that they knew all by this time; not only from the affair being generally talked of in the town, but through the messenger who had brought Mr. Berkeley's letter. It proved not to be so, however. The servant who had been to D—— had had no heart to tell the tidings; and the astonishment of the domestics was as complete as their dismay, when they were at length made to understand the fact. Melea blamed herself for injustice to some of them when she found neither threats nor murmurs, nor even questionings about what was to become of them.

The next day was Sunday; anything but a day of rest to those of the Berkeleys who remained at D——. Of the Haleham people, some were touched, and others (especially the Cavendishes) were shocked to see Fanny and Melea at church, and filling their places in the Sunday-school as usual. While, in the eyes of some people, it was unfeeling, unnatural, altogether too like defiance, the young ladies did not perceive why their own anxieties should make them neglect an office of benevolence, or exclude them from those privileges of worship which they needed more instead of less than usual.

Chapter VIII.

MARKET-DAY.

The Cavendishes were not long at leisure to wonder at the Berkeleys. It would have been wiser to prepare to imitate them. But Mr. Cavendish, who had no hope of long maintaining an apparent superiority over them, determined not to sink so quietly and simply as they had done, but to cause a sensation before his catastrophe, as well as by means of it, and thus to finish with a kind of *éclat*.

The introduction of foreign corn on the conclusion of the war had been for some little time hastening his ruin; and, knowing that it must be accomplished by the shock given to commercial credit, through the stoppage of the D——

bank, he thought he would forestall the conclusion, and, by attributing his failure to an accident, keep as much as he could of his little remaining credit.

Wednesday being the market-day, no time was to be lost. On Tuesday, therefore, (a clerk having been opportunely got rid of,) all Haleham was thrown into consternation by the news of an embezzlement to an unheard-of extent, which had been perpetrated by the departed clerk. Bills were presently in every window, and on all the walls. Mrs. Cavendish was understood to be in hysterics, Mr. Longe gone in pursuit of the knave, the children running wild, while the governess was telling the story to everybody; and Mr. Cavendish talking about justice, and hanging the fellow; and everything but the facts of the case;—for he could not be brought to give any such information respecting the nature of the embezzled property, as could enable the magistrates to help him to recover it. Mr. Berkeley and Horace, hearing the news on their return to Haleham on the Tuesday night, pronounced it too coarse a device,—one which would deceive nobody; and prophesied that not only would the bank be shut as soon as the market opened in the morning, but that nothing whatever would remain to pay any creditor.

It seemed as if Enoch Pye was, for once, as shrewd as many a fonder lover of lucre; or perhaps it was the union of Mrs. Parndon's worldly wisdom with his own which caused him to be on the alert this Wednesday morning. Before the

bank opened he was lingering about the street, and was the first to enter the doors to present a check for thirteen pounds, which he desired to have in gold, troubling himself to assign various reasons for coming so early, and wishing for gold. Almost before the clerk had told over the sum on the counter, a voice which Enoch did not find it convenient to hear, shouted from behind him, "Stop, there, stop! Make no payments. The bank has stopped. Make no payments, I say!"

The clerk snatched at the gold, but Enoch was too expert for him. He had crossed his arms over the money at the first alarm, and now swept it into his hat, which he held between his knees, looking all the time in the clerk's face, with,

"Eh? What? What does he say? I won't detain you any longer. Good day, sir."

"I'll detain you, though," muttered the clerk, swinging himself over the counter, and making for the door. Enoch brushed out of it, however, turning his wig half round by the way. Cavendish, coming up, caught at the skirt of his coat, but Enoch could now spare a hand to twitch it away. He ran on, (the school-boys whom he met supposing him suddenly gone mad, to be hugging his hat while his wig covered only half his head,) and never stopped till he stood panting in Mrs. Parndon's presence. The only thought he had had time for all the way was, that the widow would, he really believed, marry him within the hour for such a feat as this, if he had

but the license ready, and could summon courage to ask her. Enoch was far too modest to perceive what everybody else saw, that the widow was quite ready to have him at any hour. He was much gratified at present by her soothing cares. She set his wig straight, examined the flap which had been in danger, to see if it had lost a button or wanted a stitch; shook and turned out the lining of his hat, lest a stray coin should be hidden, and setting her hot muffin and a fresh cup of tea before him, tried to tempt him to a second breakfast. It was not to be expected, however, that he could stay while such news was abroad: he had come, partly by instinct, and partly to be praised for his feat; and now he must go and bear his share of the excitements of the day. The widow persuaded him to wait two minutes, while she swallowed her cup of tea and threw on her shawl, leaving the muffin,—not as a treat to her cat or her little maid,—but to be set by and warmed up again for her tea, as she found time to direct before she took Mr. Pye's arm, and hastened with him down the street as fast as his ill-recovered breath would allow.

The excitement was indeed dreadful. If an earthquake had opened a chasm in the centre of the town, the consternation of the people could scarcely have been greater. It was folly to talk of holding a market, for not one buyer in twenty had any money but Cavendish's notes; and unless that one happened to have coin, he could achieve no purchase. The indignant people

spurned bank-paper of every kind, even Bank of England notes. They trampled it under foot; they spat upon it; and some were foolish enough to tear it in pieces; thus destroying their only chance of recovering any of their property. Mr. Pye, and a few other respected townsmen, went among them, explaining that it would be wise at least to take care of the "promise to pay," whether that promise should be ultimately fulfilled or not; and that it would be fulfilled by the Bank of England and many other banks, he had not the smallest doubt, miserably as the Haleham bank had failed in its engagements.

The depth of woe which was involved in this last truth could not be conceived but by those who witnessed the outward signs of it. The bitter weeping of the country women, who prepared to go home penniless to tell their husbands that the savings of years were swept away; the sullen gloom of the shop-keepers, leaning with folded arms against their door-posts, and only too sure of having no customers for some time to come: the wrath of farmer Martin, who was pushing his way to take his daughter Rhoda from out of the house of the swindler who had plundered her of her legacy and her wages in return for her faithful service; and the mute despair of Rhoda's lover, all of whose bright hopes were blasted in an hour;—his place gone, his earnings lost, and his mistress and himself both impoverished on the eve of their marriage: the desperation of the honest labourers of the neighbourhood on finding that the rent they had prepared, and the little

provision for the purchase of winter food and clothing, had all vanished as in a clap of thunder; the merriment of the parish paupers at being out of the scrape, and for the time better off than better men;—all these things were dreadful to hear and see. Even Mrs. Parndon's curiosity could not keep her long abroad in the presence of such misery. She went home, heartsick, to wonder and weep; while she told the sad tale to her daughter in a letter of twice the usual length. Enoch Pye retired behind his counter, and actually forgot to examine his stock of bank notes till he had paid his tribute of sorrow to the troubles of those who were less able than himself to bear pecuniary losses. Henry Craig was found wherever he was most wanted. He had little to give but advice and sympathy; but he had reason to hope that he did some good in calming the people's minds, and in showing them how they might accommodate and help one another. Under his encouragement, a limited traffic went on in the way of barter, which relieved a few of the most pressing wants of those who had entered the market as purchasers. The butcher and gardener did get rid of some of their perishable stock by such an exchange of commodities as enabled the parents of large families to carry home meat and potatoes for their children's dinners. Seldom has traffic been conducted so languidly or so pettishly; and seldom have trifling bargains been concluded amidst so many tears.

Cavendish found the affair even worse than he had anticipated. The confusion within doors

actually terrified him when he took refuge there from the tumult without. His wife's hysterics were as vigorous as ever. Miss Egg had packed up her things and departed by the early coach, in high dudgeon with her dear friends for owing her a year's salary, and having, as she began to suspect, flattered her of late with false hopes of her winning Mr. Longe, in order to protract their debt to her, and furnish their children with a governess on cheap terms. Farmer Martin had carried off Rhoda, allowing her no further option than to take with her the poor little baby, whom there was no one else to take care of. The other servants had immediately departed, helping themselves pretty freely with whatever they hoped would not be missed, telling themselves and one another that these were the only particles of things in the shape of wages that they should ever see. Finding his house in this forlorn and deserted state, with no better garrison than a screaming wife and frightened children, while he was in full expectation of a siege by an enraged mob, the hero of this varied scene took the gallant resolution of making his escape while he could do it quietly. He looked out an old black hat, and left his white one behind him; buttoned up some real money which he found in his wife's desk; threw on a cloak which concealed his tight ancles, and sneaked on board one of his own lighters, bribing the only man who was left on the premises to tow him down the river for a few miles, and tell nobody in what direction he was gone.

Among the many hundreds whom he left be-

hind to curse his name and his transactions, there were some who also cursed the system under which he had been able to perpetrate such extensive mischief. Some reprobated the entire invention of a paper currency; in which reprobation they were not, nor ever will be, joined by any who perceive with what economy, ease, and dispatch the commercial transactions of a country may be carried on by such a medium of exchange. Neither would any degree of reprobation avail to banish such a currency while convenience perpetually prompts to its adoption. Others ascribed the whole disaster to the use of small notes, urging that, prior to 1797, while no notes of a lower denomination than 5*l.* were issued, a run on a bank was a thing almost unheard of. Others, who esteemed small notes a convenience not to be dispensed with, complained of the example of inconvertibility set by the Bank of England; and insisted that methods of ensuring convertibility must exist, and would be all-sufficient for the security of property. Some objected to this, that mere convertibility was not enough without limitation; because though convertibility ensures the ultimate balance of the currency,—provides that it shall right itself from time to time,—it does not prevent the intermediate fluctuations which arise from the public not being immediately aware of the occasional abundance or dearth of money in the market. Notes usually circulate long before the holders wish for the gold they represent; so that fraudulent or careless issuers of convertible paper may have greatly exceeded

safety in their issues before the public has warning to make its demand for gold; and thus the security of convertibility may be rendered merely nominal, unless accompanied by limitation. Others had a theory, that runs on banks were themselves the evil, and not merely the indications of evil; that all would be right if these could be obviated; and that they might be obviated in the provinces by the country bankers making their notes payable in London only. These reasoners did not perceive how much the value of notes, as money, would be depreciated by their being made payable at various and inconvenient distances; so that there would soon be as many different values in notes of the same denomination as there are different distances between the principal country towns and London. All agreed that there must be something essentially wrong in the then present system, under which a great number of towns and villages were suffering as severely as Haleham.

The tidings of distress which every day brought were indeed terrific. The number of banks which failed went on increasing, apparently in proportion to the lessening number of those which remained, till every one began to ask where the mischief would stop, and whether any currency would be left in the country. Before the commercial tumult of that awful time ceased, ninety-two country banks became bankrupt, and a much greater number stopped payment for a longer or shorter period.

In proportion to the advantage to the moral

and worldly condition of the working classes of having a secure place of deposit where their savings might gather interest, was the injury then resulting from the disappointment of their confidence. Savings-banks now exist to obviate all excuse for improvidence on the plea of the difficulty of finding a secure method of investment, or place of deposit: but at the period when this crash took place, savings-banks were not established; and then was the time for the idle and wasteful to mock at the provident for having bestowed his labour and care in vain, and for too many of the latter class to give up as hopeless the attempt to improve their condition, since they found that their confidence had been abused, and their interests betrayed. There were not so great a number of working-people who suffered by the forfeiture of their deposits as by holding the notes of the unsound banks, because few banks received very small deposits; but such as there were belonged to the meritorious class who had been cheated in Haleham by Cavendish. They were the Chapmans, the Rhodas,—the industrious and thrifty, who ought to have been the most scrupulously dealt with, but whose little store was the very means of exposing them to the rapacity of sharpers, and of needy traders in capital whose credit was tottering.

After the pause which one day succeeded the relation of some melancholy news brought by Mr. Craig to the Berkeleys, Melea wondered whether other countries ever suffered from the state of their currency as England was

now suffering, or whether foreign governments had long ago learned wisdom from our mistakes.

Her father replied by telling her that the Bank of Copenhagen had been privileged, before the middle of the last century, to issue inconvertible paper money; that the king, wishing to monopolize the advantage of making money so easily, had some years afterwards taken the concern into his own hands; and that, at the present moment, his people were wishing him joy of his undertaking, a dollar in silver being worth just sixteen dollars in paper.

"How very strange it seems," observed Melea, "that none of these governments appear to see that the value of all money depends on its proportion to commodities; and the value of gold and paper money on their proportion to each other!"

"Catherine of Russia seems to have had some idea of it," observed Mr. Berkeley, "for she was very moderate in her paper issues for some time after she gave her subjects that kind of currency: but at this time, the same denomination of money is worth four times as much in metals as in paper. Maria Theresa went wrong from the first. Presently after she introduced paper money into Austria, a silver florin was worth thirteen florins in paper. All the subsequent attempts of that government to mend the matter have failed. It has called in the old paper, and put out fresh; yet the proportionate value of the two kinds of currency is now eight to one. But the most incredible thing is that any government

should institute a representative currency which, in fact, represents nothing."

"Represents nothing! How is that possible?"

"Ask your mother to tell you the history of the Assignâts. I know it is painful to her to recur to that terrible time; but she will think, as I do, that you ought to be aware what were the consequences of the most extraordinary currency the world ever saw."

Mr. Craig could now account for Mrs. Berkeley's gravity whenever the subject of a vicious currency was touched upon in the remotest manner. He supposed she had suffered from family misfortunes at the time when all France was plunged into poverty by the explosion of the assignât system.

"How could a representative currency actually represent nothing?" inquired Melea again.

"The assignâts were declared legal money," replied Mrs. Berkeley, "but there was nothing specified which they could represent. Their form was notes bearing the inscription 'National Property Assignât of 100 francs.' The question was first, what was meant by national property; and next, what determined the value of 100 francs."

"And what was this national property?"

"In this case, it meant the confiscated estates which had fallen into the hands of the government, and were sold by auction: and the reason why this new kind of money was issued was because the revolutionary government, however rich in confiscated estates, was much in want of money, and thought this might be a good way of

converting the one into the other. You see, however, that whether these slips of paper would bear the value of 100 francs, depended on the proportion of the assignâts to the purchasable property, and of both to the existing currency, and to the quantity of other commodities."

"And, probably, the government, like many other governments, altered this proportion continually by new issues of paper money, while there was no corresponding increase of the property it represented?"

"Jus so. More estates were confiscated, but the assignâts multiplied at a tenfold rate; driving better money out of the market, but still superabounding. Prices rose enormously; and in proportion as they rose, people grew extravagant."

"That seems an odd consequence of high prices."

"If prices had been high from a scarcity of commodities, people would have grown economical; but the rise of price was in this case only a symptom of the depreciation of money. Every one, being afraid that it would fall still lower, was anxious to spend it while it remained worth anything. I well remember my poor father coming in and telling us that he had purchased a chateau in the provinces with its furniture. 'Purchased a chateau!' cried my mother. 'When you have no fortune to leave to your children, what madness to purchase an estate in the provinces!' 'It would be greater madness,' my father replied, 'to keep my money till that which now purchases an estate will scarcely buy a joint of

meat. If I could lay by my money, I would: as I cannot, I must take the first investment that offers.' And he proved to be right; for the deplorable poverty we soon suffered was yet a less evil than the punishment which my father could scarcely have escaped if he had kept his assignâts."

"Do you mean legal punishment?"

"Yes. The government issued orders that its own most sapient plan should not fail. There was to be no difference between metal money and assignâts, under pain of six years' imprisonment in irons for every bargain in which the one should be taken at a greater or less value than the other."

"How stupid! How barbarous!" exclaimed everybody. "Almost the entire population must have been imprisoned in irons, if the law had been executed: for they had little money but assignâts, and no power on earth could make paper promises valuable by calling them so."

"Yet, when the law was found inefficient, the punishment was increased. Instead of six years, the offenders were now to be imprisoned twenty. As this expedient failed, more and more violent ones were resorted to, till the oppression became intolerable. All concealment of stock, every attempt to avoid bringing the necessaries of life to market, to be sold at the prices fixed by the government, every evasion of an offered purchase, however disadvantageous, was now made punishable by death."

"Why then did not everybody refuse to buy,

rather than expose sellers to such fearful danger?"

"There was soon no occasion for such an agreement. The shops were for the most part closed; and those which were not, displayed only the worst goods, while the better kinds still passed from hand to hand by means of secret bargains."

"But what was done about the sale of bread and meat, and other articles of daily use?"

"The baker's shop opposite our windows had a rope fastened from the counter to a pole in the street: and customers took their place in the line it formed, according to the order of their coming. Each customer presented a certificate, obtained from the commissioners appointed to regulate all purchases and sales; which certificate attested the political principles of the bearer——"

"What! could not he buy a loaf of bread without declaring his political principles?"

"No; nor without a specification of the quantity he wished to purchase."

"What a length of time it must have taken to supply a shop full of customers!"

"I have often seen hungry wretches arrive at dusk, and found them still waiting when I looked out in the morning. Our rest was frequently disturbed by tumults, in which the more exhausted of the strugglers were beaten down, and trampled to death. The bakers would fain have closed their shops; but every one who did so, after keeping shop a year, was declared a suspected

person; and suspected persons had at that time no better prospect than the guillotine."

"This system could not, of course, last long. How did it come to an end?"

"The government called in the assignâts when they had sunk to three hundred times less than their nominal value. But this was not till more murders had been committed by the paper money than by their guillotine."

"You mean by distress,—by starvation."

"And by the suicides occasioned by distress. My poor father was found in the Seine, one morning, after having been absent from home for two days, endeavouring in vain to make the necessary purchases of food for his family."

Mr. B. added, that people flocked down to the river side every morning, to see the bodies of suicides fished up, and to look along the shore for some relative or acquaintance who was missing. As Melea had observed, this could not go on long; but the consequences were felt to this day, and would be for many a day to come. Every shock to commercial credit was a national misfortune which it required long years of stability to repair.

This was the point to which Mr. Berkeley's conversation now invariably came round; and none of his family could carry him over it. Silence always ensued on the mention of commercial credit. It was indeed a sore subject in every house in Haleham.

Chapter IX.

A FUTURE DAY.

"Is it all settled?—completely settled?" asked Henry Craig of Horace, just when the latter was about to mount the coach to London, after a short visit of business, a few weeks after the stoppage of the D—— bank. "And your sisters both leave us immediately?"

"Certainly, and immediately. But ask them about it; for they can bear the subject better than I."

"I knew their intentions from the beginning; but so soon,—so very soon. I did not wish to believe it till I heard it from one of yourselves. I am grieved for you, Horace, almost as much as for Mr. and Mrs. Berkeley."

"And for yourself," thought Horace, who was now fully aware of Mr. Craig's interest in one member of his family. "Do not think, Henry," he continued, "that I blame my sisters for what they have done. They took this step as a matter of course,—as a necessary consequence of my father's misfortune; and though I do not think I could have encouraged them to it, I cannot bring myself to say they are wrong. Yet if I had known——"

"I thought you always knew. I was fully aware what they would do."

"If I had thought them in earnest——"

It was indeed true that Horace's sisters could

bear this subject better than he. If they had been less grateful for his brotherly pride and affection, they would have called him weak for regretting that they should, like him, wish and work for independence.

"We leave Lewis behind, you know," said Melea, smiling at the grave boy who was timidly listening to what Mr. Craig was saying, the next day, about his cousins going to live somewhere else. "Lewis has made his uncle and aunt very fond of him already; and when he is son and daughters and nephew to them at once, they will have more interest in him still. Lewis's being here makes us much less uneasy in leaving home than anything else could do."

While Melea went on to show how wrong it would be to remain a burden upon their father in his old age and impaired circumstances, Lewis stole out of the room to hide his tears.

"And now, Melea," said Henry Craig, "Lewis is out of hearing of your lesson, and you know how perfectly I agreed with you long ago about what you are doing. Do not treat me as if I had not been your friend and adviser throughout. Why all this explanation to me?"

"I do not know; unless it was to carry off too strong a sympathy with Lewis," replied Melea, smiling through the first tears Henry Craig had seen her shed. "But do not fancy that I shrink. I am fond of children, I love teaching them; and if I could but form some idea of what kind of life it will be in other respects——

"You know, Melea," Henry continued, after a long pause, "you know how I would fain have saved you from making trial of this kind of life. You have understood, I am sure——"

"I have, Henry. I know it all. Say no more now."

"I must, Melea, because, if we are really destined to be a support to each other, if we love so that our lot is to be one through life, now is the time for us to yield each other that support, and to acknowledge that love."

"We cannot be more sure than we were before, Henry. We have little that is new to tell each other."

"Then you are mine, Melea. You have long known that I was wholly yours. You must have known——"

"Very long; and if you knew what a support —what a blessing in the midst of everything— it makes me ashamed to hear any thing of *my* share in this trial."

Henry was too happy to reply.

"It is only a delay then," he said at length. "We are to meet, to part no more in this world. You are mine. Only say you are now already mine."

"Your own, and I trust God will bless our endeavours to do our duty, till it becomes our duty to——. But it will be a long, long time first; and my having undertaken such a charge must prove to you that I am in earnest in saying this. I would not have said what I have done, Henry, nor have listened to you, if I had not

hoped that our mutual confidence would make us patient. We shall have much need of patience."

"We shall not fail, I trust. I feel as if I could bear any thing now:—absence, suspense,—whatever it may please Heaven to appoint us. But I feel as if I could do every thing too; and who knows how soon——Oh, Melea, is there really no other difficulty than our own labours may remedy? Your father—Mrs. Berkeley——"

"Ask them," said Melea, smiling. "I have not asked them, but I have not much fear."

Though Henry and Melea had long been sure that they had no reserves from each other, they now found that there was a fathomless depth of thoughts and feelings to be poured out; and that it was very well that Fanny was detained in the town, and that Lewis was long in summoning courage to show his red eyes in the dining-room. Its being Saturday was reason enough for the young clergyman's going away without seeing the rest of the family; and that Monday was the day fixed for her departure accounted for Melea's gentle gravity. She intended to open her mind fully to her mother before she went; but she must keep it to herself this night.

Every one was struck with the fervour of spirit with which the curate went through the services of the next day. Melea alone knew what was in his heart, and understood the full significance of his energy.

It was not till Fanny and Melea were gone,

and there was dullness in the small house to which their parents had removed, and it was sometimes difficult to cheer Mr. Berkeley, and wounding to hear the school-children's questions when the young ladies would come back again, that Henry Craig could fully realize the idea of the necessity of patience. He was still too happy when alone, and too much gratified by Mrs. Berkeley's confidence in him as in a son, to mourn over the events which had taken place as if they involved no good with their evil. Some of the dreariness of the family prospects belonged to his; but he had, in addition to their steady and lively hope of the due recompense of honourable self-denial and exertion, a cause of secret satisfaction which kept his spirit poised above the depressing influences of suspense and loneliness. He still believed that, happen what might, he could, without difficulty, be patient. According to present appearances, there was every probability that this faith would be put to the proof.

END OF PART THE FIRST.

W. Clowes, Stamford-street.

BERKELEY THE BANKER.

PART II.

Chapter I.

THE WIFE'S JOURNEY.

Hester had been married four years, and had scarcely seen the face of an old friend in all that time. Mr. Pye had once been obliged to visit London on business, and Mrs. Parndon took advantage of his escort to visit her daughter, which she had not previously appeared inclined to do. Her visit was, however, very short, as she declared that she always pined for home,—that she was bewildered with the bustle of London,—that she could not sleep well in any house but her own; and that, in short, Halcham was the best place for her. Hester anxiously endeavoured to find out whether there was anything in the ways of her household which was displeasing to her mother. Edgar happened to be absent—gone down to Brighton for a holiday—which was very well, as it was certain that there was much in his habits which would astonish and terrify his good mother-in-law. His wife feared that Mrs. Parndon's visit being concluded before his return, was too plain a sign that she was aware of his domestic conduct being such as it would be

painful to her to witness; it being unlikely, as the still loving wife said to herself, that anybody but herself should understand Edgar's reasons for all that he did, and make allowance for the practices that young men fall into when they are thrown together as clerks in a public establishment are. Since irregularity of hours had become far from the most trying circumstance in Edgar's way of life, Hester had carefully concealed even that one from her mother; and Mrs. Parndon made no reference to it during her stay: yet her hurry to be gone looked as if she might know it, and with it, much more; and this suspicion prevented Hester from saying anything about a repetition of her visit. Her voice was lost in tears when she saw her mother preparing with alacrity to depart, and when she remembered how long it might be before she should again be cheered by the sight of a Haleham face, or by conversation about the concerns of her early friends; concerns which were more interesting to her than ever as her own grew less and less pleasant in the contemplation.

Invitations were given, from time to time, to go down among these old friends;—invitations which she would fain have accepted, but on which Edgar made but one reply, as often as they were communicated to him—that he could not spare her. Her consolation in this answer was, that it would keep up his credit with the Haleham people as an attached husband; but it could not but appear strange to herself that he found it so difficult to spare her when he dis-

pensed with as much of her society as he could at home, and seized every opportunity of running down into the country, or taking a flight to the seaside without her. She could not help thinking, as she sat solitary, with the dusty beams of an August sun shining into her close parlour, that it would not have cost so very much to have taken a week's trip to Haleham;—not so much as any one of Edgar's many trips elsewhere, which were paid for, she supposed, out of the earnings of her pencil. She would not have troubled him for the money; she would have made a great effort to work harder, if he would have let her go. The prospect of once more beholding the harvest-fields and green lanes, the church-tower, and quiet, clean market-street of Haleham, would give her strength for an unusual effort; while it was really very difficult to draw every day and all day long, with nothing better under her window than the hot rattling street, and with nobody to speak to but Philip, who yawned incessantly between his counter and his bed.

Such a train of thought happened to pass through her mind one day when Edgar was no farther off than the Mint. She had been drawing all the morning—she had been drawing for two hours since dinner; and was now sitting with her hands pressed to her dazzled aching eyes. It was somewhat startling to feel a pair of hands folded over her own, and her cheek and forehead repeatedly kissed before she could recover the use of her eyes. It was only Edgar;

but what joy that Edgar should be playing such a trick as this once more, after years of a most business-like gravity of deportment!

"Your poor head is aching, I am sure," said he. "And this little hand is whiter than it should be. You are not well, Hester."

"It is very foolish to sit down to draw directly after dinner in such hot weather as this," observed Hester, struggling with tears which would come, she could scarcely have told why.

"My dear little woman, you are quite nervous and overworked and ill. You must go down to your mother, and see if she and Hale ham cannot set you right again."

Hester looked up at her husband, with a cheek no longer pale. He went on,—

"No time like the present. I will send and have your place taken by the early morning coach."

"O, how very good you are!" cried Hester. "You cannot think—I am sure it will do me more good than—O, Edgar, you do not know how I have longed this summer to see those meadows again!"

"Well; you shall see them before to-morrow evening."

"Had it not better be one day later?" inquired Hester, timidly, knowing that her husband did not like being opposed in any of his determinations. "It might be an inconvenience to my mother to have me go without notice; and I cannot get all my things together to-night; and one day more will finish these drawings."

Edgar said if she meant to go at all, it must be the next morning.

"I should be paid for these to-morrow, if I carried them home myself," once more urged Hester, thus intimating at the same time that she was bare of cash.

"Leave all that to me," replied Edgar, good-humouredly. "I will take care and get your due out of your employer."

Hester had no doubt of this. Her husband went on more to the purpose.

"You must want money, I know; and here is a supply for you. Aye, you look surprised to see such a parcel of notes, but they are all ones. I took care to bring you ones, because the Haleham people have been terribly pinched for small money since the crash. You would have found it difficult to get change for tens or fives."

"How very kind of you to think of such little things, when you were planning this journey for me!" exclaimed the grateful wife. "But here is far more money than I can possibly want in a week."

"Why should you stay only a week? So seldom as you leave home, I should be sorry to hurry you back again. My trips are short enough, to be sure; but you have no business at the Mint to bring you back just when you are beginning to enjoy yourself; and I am sure I should be sorry to hurry you."

"But, Edgar, if I were to stay a month, I could not spend all this money."

"Not on yourself, little woman, I dare say;

for you are not one of the wives who like to see their husbands work hard that they may spend in idleness. You work as hard as I do; and if you do not bring me quite such a bundle of notes as this, neither do you bedizen yourself like half your neighbours in this street. But, Hester, we have carried our economy a little too far."

"I am so glad to hear it!" cried Hester. "But I did not know how much we might spend; and it is always safer to spend too little than too much."

"True; but now is a good time to be setting ourselves up with some things that we want. Get yourself a new gown or two, my dear, and a bonnet, and whatever else you think you really want."

"I will go this moment, there is time before dark, and I can take my place myself," cried Hester, hastily putting away her drawing materials; but her husband laid a heavy hand upon her shoulder.

"You shall do no such thing. You have enough to do to pack up, and make arrangements for the time of your absence; and I am sure we had both rather that you should spend your little money among your old Haleham friends. Philip will spare his boy to run and take your place, I am sure."

The boy came for orders, and Hester was giving him a note out of her new treasure, when Edgar stopped her hand. He gave the boy a sovereign from his own pocket, observing that she should carry her little fund with her untouched.

"And while you are spending," he went on, "you may as well get a few more things that we want very much."

"My mother and I can make you some new shirts," observed Hester.

"Yes; and I have always meant that you should have a more complete stock of house-linen than I could afford when we were married. That table-cover is terribly stained and shabby. I am nearly out of writing-paper too: you may get as large a stock of stationery as you please from your old friend Pye."

"Do you mean that I am to get all these things at Haleham? Will not the Haleham people laugh at a Londoner going down to buy the goods they get from London?"

"Never mind if they do. Tell them you had rather have accounts with old acquaintance than with new. You can take boxes that will hold your purchases; and if not, I shall not grumble at a little extra expense for carriage. And now go and pack up; for I have no doubt of there being a place for you."

Hester felt as if in a dream. The journey might be a reality; the bundle of bank notes might be no illusion; but Edgar's consideration for her convenience, and for the gratification of the Haleham people, was wholly astonishing. She was haunted with a dread that a change would yet come over her happy prospects. When assured that her place was taken, she trembled at her husband's approaching footstep, lest he should be coming to recall his permission.

When she went to bed, scarcely able to stand from fatigue, but too excited to expect immediate sleep, she was certain of not waking in time for the coach. Every thing seemed more probable than that she should, by the same hour the next night, be in the little light-green room, with its white curtains, and eastern window open to the moon, where she had slept the happy sleep of childhood and youth. Such enjoyment was, however, actually in store for her. Edgar did not change his mind, but rather seemed eager that nothing should delay her departure. She did not sleep too late, but, on the contrary, started up when the first brick-red reflection from the opposite chimnies entered her chamber. She had a full quarter of an hour to wait in the morning shadows of the inn-yard, amidst the shouts of the ostlers, the clatter of horses' hoofs, the stare of yawning loungers, and the importunities of porters. When fairly off the stones, and bowling over the smooth roads, she felt as much inclined to talk and be merry as any school-girl going home for the holidays. Her companions not looking particularly exhilarated, however, she kept her spirits to herself, and sat, with her face close to the open window, letting the dewy hedges and the flowery banks whirl away amidst a dreamy kind of half notice, watching for glimpses into the green lanes which led to retired farm-houses, and feeling disposed to nod to every meek-faced sheep that looked up from its browsing as the coach passed by. She was going back to Haleham a happy wife; for Ed-

gar's revived attention was felt in combination with the delicious associations awakened by the scenery of a summer morning in the country; her many long days of disappointment, and nights of weary watching were forgotten; and all sense of pain and injury was lost in her present emotions of grateful pleasure.

What a bustle was there in Mrs. Parndon's house that afternoon! There was dinner to be brought up again, when the little maid had nearly finished what her mistress had left; and the sheets to be aired, and the hanging of the tent-bed to be put on; and Mrs. Price, the mantua-maker and milliner, to be sent for to take orders about improving Hester's shabby wardrobe with all possible speed; and a hundred reasons for this shabbiness to be invented,—such as London dust in the summer—leaving handsome winter things behind—and so forth. When Mrs. Price had been duly impressed with the necessity of her apprentice working all night, in order to Hester's genteel appearance before the old acquaintances who would certainly call; when the newest fashion of a morning cap had been sent over, approved, and purchased, and a bonnet promised by the time Mrs. Morrison should want to show herself in town in the middle of the day, —that is, by the time the mother's vanity was catered for—she began to think of indulging a mother's affection.

"Well, my dear," said she, "I believe you are right, and we will keep snug for to-day, unless Mr. Pye should happen to go past. You will not object

to his coming in; and he will never observe your gown being so much faded, depend upon it. Now, rest yourself on my bed. We can easily beat it up again; and I will sit beside you, and rub up your straw bonnet a-bit, while we talk. I think I can get off some of the tan, and I have a ribbon that is better than this; and then you can go out in it early in the morning, or in the gray of the evening, till Mrs. Price sends home your new one. Come, lie down; and I will get my work-basket in a minute."

Hester was not at all tired. She had rather sit by the window and look at the London Pride in the court, and at the town's-people as they passed by. There was one corner of the window-seat too, whence she could catch an angle of the church tower.

Just as she pleased; only it would be as well not to let herself be seen over the blind till dusk. Could not she be just quilling up a frill or a collar while they sat, that would look a little better than the one she had on? Well, well: to be sure she might not be inclined for work, and there would be plenty of time, perhaps, when the bonnet was done. Whom or what did Hester want to hear about first?

Everybody. Everything. How was Mr. Pye?

"O very well, in all respects but his hearing. Poor man! Everybody sees that his deafness is growing upon him sadly; but he does not like to have it noticed, and I am afraid it would hurt him very much to mention such a thing as his using a trumpet; but how he is to

get on in his shop, all by himself, without it, I don't see. It was but last week I was there when a lady from the country was buying a little book; and while he was tying it up, she asked him what the bells were ringing for, forgetting that it was a royal birth-day. 'What are the bells ringing for, Mr. Pye?' says she. 'Eighteen-pence, Madam,' said he. 'No,—the bells are ringing. Do you know what it is for?' says she. 'One and sixpence, Madam,' said he. If it goes on so, ladies will not like coming to his shop; but he will never be persuaded to get a trumpet."

"If we get him one,—if one came down from London on purpose for him, would he not use it? I think he would hardly refuse any gift from me."

"If he thanked you, he would just put it by, and we should see no more of it."

"Then he should have somebody to wait in his shop."

"Aye: or somebody to be at his elbow to help him when he is puzzled. When he comes here of an evening, he has all sorts of ways of trying to find out what he is at a loss about, without exactly saying that he is at a loss. You cannot think what work I have sometimes to help him to guess out what people's orders can mean, when he has caught only half of them."

"What weakness! What a pity he should give so much trouble to himself and everybody else! However, I suppose there is one good consequence of this false shame. He does not

teaze his next neighbour to tell him all that every body says."

"No. I am generally with him when there is conversation going on; and he knows I tell him all that is worth hearing. Only, it is rather a pity that he pretends to have heard it the first time. However, we none of us know,—we might do the the same; and there is not a more upright, or a kinder man than Mr. Pye;—except, indeed, that he need not speak quite so sharply, sometimes when he happens to have heard what was said, and one repeats it all for his sake. But, as I said, we none of us know. I do so wonder whether he will come to-night! It is seldom he misses; especially since he has been a little out of spirits about his business."

Hester was very sorry to hear of this. She had hoped that Mr. Pye's old-established concern had been one of the least likely to suffer from the changes of the times.

"After such a crash as Cavendish's," replied the widow, "all concerns in the neighbourhood must feel a great difference. But, besides bad debts and much loss of custom, you would hardly believe how Mr. Pye's business has suffered only from the scarcity of small change. The great country folks come to buy children's books as they used to do; and they let their bills run up to a large even sum. But the middling and poor people, who do not run bills, have mostly left off sending for their little supply of stationery, and their cheap tracts, and even their almanacks. You may be in the shop the whole

morning, and not a customer will come for a penny sheet of paper; which is a thing I should not have believed five years ago. Mr. Pye laughs, poor man, and says that if love-letters are written in Haleham now, it must be on the backs of old letters; for none of the Haleham lovers seem to have any pence to spare."

"How do the grocers and drapers and butchers get on?" asked Hester. "The same inconvenience must affect them."

"There is nothing for it but letting bills run, or serving two or three customers together, who pay each other afterwards as they may agree. Some of our shopkeepers excuse a small part of the price in consideration of being paid in change. They are very unwilling to take large notes. A ten will rarely change for any thing but two fives; and five may go round the town for days before any one will take it for a small payment."

"It is very well," observed Hester, "that my husband remembered this, and gave me only ones. To be sure he is the person to be aware of such things if any body is, for the Mint has been very busy lately coining bank tokens. But if small change bears a premium, I suppose much that has disappeared will soon come back again."

The widow wished it might; and that it would bring with it the credit and the plenty of money in which Haleham had formerly rejoiced. Hester observed, that the credit must co-exist with the abundance of money in order to make

it of any use; and that credit would be now of some use, she supposed, in compensating for the scarcity of money, if its diminution had not unfortunately been the cause of such scarcity. She was surprised, however, to find her mother, an annuitant, sighing for the days of high prices. She thought she must now find her income go much farther than during the time when Cavendish's bank was flourishing. This was very true; and Mrs. Parndon's sighs were for Enoch and not for herself. She brightened when reminded to relate how the little matters of her housekeeping had grown cheaper since her daughter left her. When the list was gone through, Hester remarked that the recollection of this comforted her about the Berkeleys. Edgar had told her that the partners of the D—— bank were living on allowances made by the creditors, while the affairs of the bank were being wound up. It was pleasant to think that such an allowance became worth more as money grew scarcer; and she hoped that what she at first thought a very poor income for Mr. and Mrs. Berkeley, might by this time have been proved enough to make them very comfortable. The young ladies too had salaries; and these were days when salaries were very advantageous.

"You forget, my dear, how far the debts of the family exceed the allowance and the earnings on which they live. The D—— bank incurred these debts when money was cheap, and has to pay them now that money is dear; which adds to the difficulties of the partners in a way that

nobody could have foreseen. It is a subject that poor Mr. Berkeley cannot bear. He is forever complaining of the injustice of it, though nobody can help him now."

"It would be very well, however, if every body complained, mother; for there would be more care in future how money was made too plentiful at one time and too scarce at another. You know you used to lament very much when not only nobody could help you, but very few were inclined, because there was a great appearance of prosperity while Haleham was filled with Cavendish's notes. But how is Mrs. Berkeley? for I always liked her better than the old gentleman; and the young ladies, whom I love best of all? It will be a sad blank not to see them here."

"There is somebody who feels the blank more than you, Hester, and will help to fill it up some day. We all look to Mr. Craig to bring Miss Melea among us again, you know. He always gives me pleasant accounts about the young ladies, when I venture to ask him; and I am sure, from what he says, that they are in no wise down-hearted about a way of life that nobody at one time thought of their following."

"Did they look so when they came in the spring?"

"By no means. Miss Melea has a grave look in her sweet face now; but that would be natural from her prospects, you know. And she laughs as merrily as ever when she is with the children at their play, and sings like an angel.

She is fonder of children than ever, which is a very good sign of her being happy, so much more as she has to do with them now."

"She always was fond of children, from the time she used to run races with the little Martins in the hay-field, outstripping them every one; and if she lives to be an old lady, sitting in her easy chair from morning to night, depend upon it she will always be the first person in the room that the children will run to."

"Bless her bright face! one can hardly fancy it with the eyes dim and the hair grey; but the smile will never leave her. It will be the same if she lives to eighty. Pray Heaven she may! Here comes master Lewis, I declare. Well; you will have seen one person to-night, though not an old acquaintance. Come in, master Lewis, and see my daughter, Mrs. Edgar Morrison."

When the introduction had been properly gone through, Lewis told his errand. He could not find Mr. Pye at home, and came to seek him here, to tell him that the schoolmaster was very wroth at a set of copy-books, which had been expected and inquired for for several days, not having made its appearance; and some of the boys had been obliged to have a fragment of a holiday this afternoon from this cause. They had been upon the heath to fly kites and play cricket, whence Lewis had brought the bunch of broom, heath, and harebells which Hester had been devouring with her eyes while he was telling his story. Lewis observed that the boys

were agreeably surprised at having gained a half holiday by Enoch's fault about the copy-books, instead of being punished for it as they had expected.

Hester was surprised at this; she thought the schoolmaster had been a remarkably good-tempered person. Lewis remembered that he had considered him so at first; but the master had been an altered man from the day of Cavendish's failure. He had not only lost four pupils, and the prospect of more, by that failure, but a great deal of money. He, like every one else, had been paid in Cavendish's notes; and Lewis remembered the awful morning when the master came into the school, as white as a sheet with passion, and called out the four Master Cavendishes to stand in a row before his desk, out of which he took a handful of bank-notes, held them up in the face of the whole school, declared them as worthless as if they had been forged, denounced their issuer as a swindler, and ordered the four little boys to march off, and never show their faces to him again, since they bore the disgrace of being their father's children.—Mrs. Parndon reminded Lewis that he should not have repeated this story, as the master was long ago ashamed of the cruel conduct into which his sense of injury had goaded him.—Hester would have wondered that Lewis was allowed to go to school any more to a man who could thus give way to his passion, but that she knew that the circumstance was totally unlike the general cha-

racter of the man; and she now learned that Lewis went to him for the inferior parts of his education only, studying the classics and some still better things under Mr. Craig.

"Was nothing left of all the grand show the Cavendishes made to pay the creditors with?" asked Hester. "Was it a dead loss to everybody?"

"There was about seven-pence in the pound," replied her mother; "so they left few people to care what became of them. But it comes across my mind sometimes how that poor little tribe is fed. Nobody can conceive how they are living."

"And the premises here stand empty?"

"Yes. They are in bad repute, from nobody having kept them long together. They look so desolate!"

Hester observed that it was growing dusk, that her straw bonnet was beautified nearly as much as it could be, and that it would be very refreshing to walk out a little way. Why should not they just go and peep about at Cavendish's, and see what kind of a state the place was in?

They were presently there, and Lewis shewed them a sly way of obtaining entrance into the yards. He had been before with many a boy to play see-saw on the two or three timbers that were left, or to fish from the wharf, or to salute the lingering pigeons.

These pigeons had, as slyly, found entrance into the deserted granary, which, though called empty, contained wherewith to support a flock of pigeons through many a year of neglect. At

the sound of voices, they came peeping out of their hole, flapping their wings prodigiously, and perking their heads, and twisting their bright necks, while they eyed the strangers from the housetop. The very sound of their wings, and the feel of the weedy soil was luxury to Hester after four years of London canaries and London pavement. She was running towards the timbers with a view to see-saw, when a ripple of the water caught her eye. She turned to the steps of the staithe, stood on the lowest above the stream, now touching it with the extremity of her shoe, and now stooping to look for the minnows. It made her thirsty to watch the weeds waving in the clear water when Lewis switched the surface, and to listen to the lapse of the stream.

While she was settling with Lewis that she would go and see him fish one day, and asking whether it was permitted now to loiter among the clumped alders a little way down the other bank, or to sit and read in the boat that was moored under their shade, the widow was walking round the house, trying what she could see through the windows, that were too thickly coated with dust to allow much revelation of matters within. She put on her spectacles to read the weather-stained board which told that these premises were to be sold or let: she lifted the knocker, in spite of the rust, and knocked, just to see that nobody would come: lastly, having pulled out the rickety handle of the door in trying whether it was fastened, and broken off

a large splinter of the rotten window-sill in raising herself to look in, she stuck in the one and stuck on the other, with a guilty look round her, and went to tell Hester that it was quite time to be going home.

Just then the clock struck, and Hester could not move till she had listened to its last stroke;—its sound was so different, coming through the still evening air, from that of any London clock heard amidst the din of the streets. They had, however, kept Lewis from home too long, and Mrs. Parndon was secretly fidgeting lest Mr. Pye should have called in their absence. She could not object to see Lewis home, especially as the circuit would bring her back by her favourite way.

Hester asked fifty questions about the houses they passed, and walked slowly by wherever there were lights within, while the shutters were yet unclosed. Again and again she longed to walk in where there were girls at work round a table, or some whom she had known as girls, hushing a baby to sleep, or tying on the night-caps of ruddy-faced, drowsy boys. She did not know the apothecary's apprentice who was lighting the lamps behind the red and green jars; but every drawer with its gilt label was familiar to her. The butcher was shutting up shop; and the catch and snap of his shutters was exactly what she remembered it. There was, just as formerly, a crate and a litter of straw before the door of the crockery shop; and, as she looked in at the second-rate mantua-

maker's window, she saw the curl-papered apprentice sweeping together the scattered pins, and doubling up the tapes and measures, preparatory to putting on her bonnet and shawl for a turn and a breath of fresh air.

"Now, Master Lewis, run home. We shall see you in from this corner, you know. Our respects at home, and my daughter will do herself the honour of calling within a day or two. Be sure you remember, Master Lewis."

"O, I forgot all about the copy-books," cried Lewis.

"Never mind! We are going past, and I will remind Mr. Pye.—This way, Hester. You forget your way, child."

No. Hester was only exploring the extent of the dwelling. Was this small, ugly, upright red brick house, with a formal little garden in front, really the abode of the Berkeleys? When she remembered how Mr. Berkeley used to stretch himself out in his resting chair in the large bay window that overlooked his rosary and an expanse of meadows beyond, she could not imagine him breathing at his ease in a little parlour with only one window, and that within sight of the road.

"Why, there is Mr. Pye, I declare!" cried the widow, when she had peeped through the interstices of the picture books with which the window was decorated. "And I do not believe he has been beyond his door this evening."

It was very true that he had not. He had got hold of his favourite newspaper, which told of

all the religious meetings, and all the good publications of the week; and this refreshment of his spirit Enoch could not forego, even for Mrs. Parndon. He either would not or did not hear the tinkle of the shop-door bell: perhaps he thought that a customer who came so late must be one who might wait till he had finished his paragraph: but Hester made bold to project her face over the top of his tall newspaper, and the next moment repented having thus surprised the nervous old man. He upset his single candle with his elbow, and when more light was brought, looked by no means certain whether he should see a ghost or a form of flesh and blood. He jerked his spectacles about wonderfully for some minutes, and could remember nothing at first about the order for copy-books. When he began to recover himself, he threw Hester into distress by asking in his simple, unceremonious way, whether Providence had blessed her as she deserved in husband and in home; and whether she was not come to show her young companions what rewards in marriage attend dutiful and diligent children. The best thing she could do,—and it quite satisfied him,—was to tell the story of her sudden journey. Then how Edgar's praises resounded through the shop, and into the little back parlour where the maid of all work was lingering to overhear the fine moral lesson of a London husband being the appropriate reward of filial duty! It was very well for her morals that it reached her thus; for she would not have found it in any of the books she was

sometimes employed to dust in the window; and it is certain that Mr. Craig never preached it in church.

When Enoch had been brought to give a shy promise that he would look in at the widow's at spare hours, Hester was hurried home and to rest by her happy mother.

"How fagged you must be, my dear!" she cried, as she saw her daughter stopping before some palings, and supposed it was to rest.

"Very little indeed," replied Hester. "This mignionette smells so sweet in the night air, I must try whether it is not within reach. That in my window at home is always either black with smoke or brown with dust: and what is dew in London?"

So saying, she stole a few sprigs through the paling, promising to call and confess the next day.

"I am so glad we went out!" said she, at bed-time, cherishing her mignionette till the last moment before putting out her light. "It would have been a pity to lose one whole evening out of a single week."

"And will you stay no more than a week? We shall not let you go so soon as that, I rather think."

Hester kept down a sigh, hoped that Edgar's indulgent mood might last, and went to sleep to dream that she was called home the very next day.

Chapter II.

THE WIFE'S HOLIDAY.

So complete a revulsion in the affairs of individuals had taken place throughout Haleham, that it would have been surprising if, while all other people were busy talking about the state of the currency, the Haleham folks had not been pre-eminently occupied with it. A grand crisis was thought to be at hand, and those who had profited and those who had suffered by past changes were equally eager, the one party to look forward, the other to look back, in order to gain some degree of insight into their state and prospects. All had dearly purchased the knowledge that bank-paper is not all alike, however carelessly one sort or another may pass from hand to hand. Everybody in Haleham now knew the difference between a paper currency that depends on confidence, and one that rests on authority. Both are in fact circulating credit; but the credit of Bank of England notes is avouched by government authority, and that of private banks rests only on private confidence. It was pretty clear that confidence had been in both cases betrayed. The Bank of England had not wisely regulated its issues, and had thereby impaired the sanction of government authority. Cavendish had acted knavishly, and thus injured commercial credit. Out of the evils of the system it arose that the

honourable, and (at the time) solvent firm of the D—— bank had stopped, and been thus compelled to aggravate the decline of public confidence. The consequences of these shocks tended to ruin the classes who had kept their ground during the former alterations in the currency, while they could not be said to repair former injuries. Some people were at first very ready to say, that the sudden reduction of the quantity of money was a fine thing, because all who had suffered from there being too much would now win back again what they had lost; but this was soon found not to be the case, so far as to make the new change anything but an evil. In many instances, the suffering parties had suffered beyond the reach of reparation. Besides those who had died, and those who had failed, and those who had mortgaged and sold their property, there were multitudes whose contracts (originally advantageous and ultimately ruinous) had expired; and multitudes more whose loss of credit precluded them from sharing the advantages of a change in the amount of currency. Nobody had suffered more in proportion than the owners of house property, during the superabundance of money: but they did not profit by the reduction of its amount, for it was difficult to let houses at such a time of wavering credit; and house-rents fell with the prices of other things. All who had incurred debts through the previous rise of prices were injured anew by their fall; because, though their income might be increased, their debts were increased in the

same proportion; and the injury outweighed the advantage by so much exactly as the debts exceeded the portion of income which was spared from consumption to pay them. A capricious good fortune attended those who had just made new contracts; but this was at the expense of the other party to the contracts. Annuitants and stipendiaries were richer than before, and thought it all very fair, in return for their season of adversity; but the productive classes felt it to be very unfair: and this very difference of opinion and feeling, by giving a new shock to mutual confidence, destroyed the partial advantages which might otherwise have arisen. Thus, while manufacturers, who had bought their raw material dear, and now had to sell it, in its manufactured state, cheap, pointed enviously to the owners of the houses they dwelt in, those owners would have been glad if things had remained as they were, rather than that they should have the prospect of lowering their rents, or having their buildings stand empty. While the shopkeeper, who had bought his stock dear, and was now selling under prime cost, was grumbling at his physician's fees, the physician would have been well pleased to buy as little as formerly with his guineas, on condition of having as many patients. They declared that the present was a fine harvest-time for quack doctors; and that the undertakers were likely to profit by the numbers who killed themselves, or let themselves die, from not being able to afford a doctor. Few were contented; and the content of these was

of a kind to impair and not strengthen the security of society; for it did not spring out of the recompense of toil and prudence. Their prosperity seemed to come by chance, and had therefore no good effect on themselves or others; while it weighed light in the balance against the evils which the same revulsion brought to ten times their number. One action on the currency, all wise men agreed, is a tremendous evil. A second, though of a strictly antagonist character, can be no reparation, but only a new infliction; and a third, if any one could harbour so preposterous an idea for a moment, can only augment the confusion, and risk the entire forfeiture of public faith,—the annihilation of commercial credit.

At the then present time, in 1818, it was no longer a question whether a change should or should not take place. The change was perfectly involuntary. It had already taken place to a large extent, as the natural and unavoidable consequence of the previous action on the currency. The over-issue of former years had caused a tremendous destruction of bank-paper, and had made all banking firms cautious about issuing more. Whether there should be a reduction of the quantity of money was, therefore, no more a matter of debate. There had been, in two years, such a reduction as had raised bank-paper to within $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the value of gold. The only question was, whether advantage should be taken of this existing reduction to oblige the Bank of England to return to the old system of

convertibility. Many who had prophesied for years that the Bank of England never would return to cash payments, persisted still that it was impossible. Others, who believed that to have plenty of money was to have plenty of everything, protested that the privilege of inconvertibility ought to remain. Others foretold a dreadful increase of the crime of forgery, and did not perceive that there would be a proportionate decrease in that of coining, and an end to the offences of melting and selling gold coin. Not a few prepared themselves to forget their chronology, and to declaim in future years on the effect of the return to cash payments in impoverishing half the traders in the country; as if this return had not been the consequence instead of the cause of a reduction in the quantity of the currency. Some who had been concerned in procuring the Restriction Act, and had borne their share in that measure with fear and trembling, were now not a little astonished to find that one party of debaters took what they had meant as merely an unavoidable expedient to be a permanent improvement in the currency system; and that they regarded the return to cash payments with an evil eye, not only as inflicting immediate hardship, but as a going back from an enlightened to a barbarous system. If all had thought like this party, the originators of the Restriction measure might have spared themselves their scruples and apprehensions in introducing a state of things during which light guineas were worth more, in a legal way, than heavy

ones; during which men were tried, convicted, and punished for getting less in exchange for a heavy guinea than they might lawfully have gained for a light one; during which there was no measure for proportioning the amount of the circulating medium to the quantity of commodities; during which the most tremendous and incessant fluctuations of price might take place without any check; during which the commercial credit of the whole nation rested between the hands of the Directors of the Bank of England. Some of our legislators thought that nothing but a desperate state of affairs could have warranted the adoption of so desperate an expedient; and were simple enough to think that the sooner it could be obviated, with safety to public credit, the better; and they would have been amused, if they had not been shocked, at hearing that the state out of which the currency was then able to emerge, was actually better than the system of security by checks which they now wished to substitute.

Among all these differences of opinion, there was abundance of discussion wherever there were people who were interested in exchanges; that is, in every corner of England. The children every where grew tired of the very words "cash payments," and the women were disappointed at finding that when their husbands and brothers had exhausted the argument, whether there should and would be a return to cash payments, another subject for argument remained;—how this return could and should be effected: whether a

definite time should be fixed, after which the privilege of inconvertibility should cease; or whether the cessation should take place, whenever—be it sooner or later—Bank-paper and gold should be of exactly the same value.

A still further subject of debate was, whether the Bank should pay in coin, or in metal under some other shape. As paper-money is far more convenient in use than coined money, and would be liked better by every body, if it could but be made safe, any plan by which security could be obtained, while the great expense of coinage is saved, was likely to be received with much attention. Such a plan had been proposed before this time, and was now much discussed. It was proposed that the Bank of England should pay its notes on demand, not in coin, but in bars of metal, proved to be of the proper fineness, and divided into the proper weights. The being obliged to pay in precious metal on demand would be as great a security against an over-issue of paper as if the Bank had had to pay in coin, while the expense of coinage would be saved, the danger of runs would be prevented, and the people be kept supplied with the more convenient kind of currency. Such were the advantages expected by those who were friendly to the scheme; while such as were averse to whatever is new, offered all kinds of objections to it; and the advocates of a metallic currency were perpetually reminding the arguers that it would be as well to see whether there was any likelihood of the Bank resuming cash payments at all, before they settled how it was to be done.

There was talk in every shop in Haleham of bars of bullion; and many questions were put from one to another about whether any man would like to have his payment in bullion as well as in coin; and much information was given about the ease with which these bars might be turned into coin, by just carrying them to the Mint. Hester was much looked up to, both as being the wife of a person connected with the Mint, and as the bringer of a new supply of small notes into the little town. She found herself admirably served in the shops. The shirting she bought was warranted strong enough for the mainsail of a man-of-war, notwithstanding its beautiful fineness. The cover for her parlour table was of the richest pattern, picked out from an assortment of purple grounds and orange borders, of green grounds and yellow borders, of yellow grounds and blue borders. The stationery was of Enoch's very best. The writing-paper came from the heights, the account-books from the depths of his shop; and the pens, in symmetrical bundles, were brought out from recesses whence they issued as free from dust as if they had been plucked the hour before. When Hester took out her roll of notes to pay ready money for whatever she bought, the tradespeople and the loungers who beheld, all agreed that she had indeed made a very fine match.

"Very busy at the Mint, I trust, Mrs. Morrison," was the address of many a shopkeeper to her. "I am sure I hope they mean to send out plenty more coin yet. There is a terrible scarcity, Ma'am; and it is a sad hinderance to business.

Very little money stirring since the crash of the banks; and the gold that has come out of holes and hiding-places is nothing in comparison of the paper that is destroyed. Mr. Morrison is of my opinion, I hope, Ma'am?"

Hester was not aware what her husband thought of the matter, one way or other; but she did not say so; and began to think it odd that she, a Londoner, should know so little about the currency, while in the country every body seemed full of the subject.

"If there is so little gold and so few notes," said she, "why is not more silver used? If the banks break and leave us very little paper, and if people have hidden, or melted, or sent away their guineas, it is the most improbable thing in the world that all the silver should be gone too. Such a quantity of silver would be a little troublesome to carry about, to be sure; but that would be better than such a stoppage of business as you are all complaining of from a want of money."

The shopkeeper supposed that either there was not silver enough, or that it cost too much to coin it, or something.

"I should have thought you had understood your own affairs better," said a voice from behind, which was at once known to be Mr. Craig's, and he came forward smiling to join in the conversation. "Where could you have been in 1816," he said, addressing the shopkeeper, "not to know that silver is a legal tender only to the amount of forty shillings? If you, Mrs. Morrison, had bought three

pounds worth of shirting here, your friend behind the counter might insist on your paying one pound out of the three in gold. You cannot lawfully pay more than two pounds in silver; and it is only by mutual consent that a larger payment is ever made in that kind of money."

The shopkeeper looked as if this was news to him. Hester thought it a very absurd and unjust thing for the law to interfere with the kind of money in which people pay their neighbours. What objection in the world could there be to people using both gold and silver money to any amount that they chose to trouble themselves to carry?

"The experiment has been tried," said Mr. Craig, "in many countries, and for long periods, and it does not answer; and therefore the law steps in to declare that gold shall be the only legal tender for any sum exceeding forty shillings. You know it is necessary to fix the relative value of gold and silver, and to keep to it, if both are used as money on equal terms."

"And such fixed value does not always agree, I suppose, with its natural value. It may sometimes cost more to obtain gold, and sometimes silver; and then it is either impossible or injurious to make them keep the value originally fixed. Is this the reason?"

"This is the great objection to a double standard. If, from any circumstance, silver became more plentiful than it had been, a man would be anxious to pay his debts in silver. If he owed 100*l.* to his landlord, he would not pay him 100

sovereigns; he would go and get as much silver with his sovereigns as would coin into a hundred and ten pounds, and then pay his landlord the hundred, and keep the ten. Other people would do the same, and we should be deluged with silver coin, while the gold went to the melting-pot."

"And all money would be worth less, from there being much more of it, I suppose?"

"Yes. There would thus be the two inconveniences of a needless fluctuation in the value of the currency, and of a new coinage being necessary as often as the one metal may be more easy to be had than the other."

"Yes. If gold were the more plentiful of the two, people would be just as anxious to pay their debts in gold; and then the silver coin would disappear."

"Certainly. Now, why should we expose ourselves to these inconveniences of a double standard, when a single one does quite as well, except for small payments?"

"But why may we tender so much as forty shillings in silver? Why more than twenty?"

"Because it is not worth any body's while, for the sake of the profit on payments of forty shillings, to coin more silver than the market will bear. Up to this amount, and not beyond it, we can reconcile the advantage of a variety of money with the safety of a single standard. Surely it is the simplest way to fix one standard, that is, to order what shall be the legal fineness and weight of coin of one metal, and to leave other

kinds to the natural variations which they cannot be prevented from sharing with all commodities.'

"Why is gold made the standard? It cannot well be divided into money so small as shillings and sixpences; and surely, it would be better to have the legal tender uniform, instead of gold down to two pounds, and then silver. For that matter, copper would be better still, if it were not so heavy and bulky."

"There are different opinions among wise men as to which of the two superior metals should be the standard. Nobody, I believe, wishes for copper."

"But copper is a legal tender, I suppose, up to a shilling; or perhaps beyond it, as silver is to more than a pound."

"Copper is a legal tender to the amount of fifteen shillings."

"Well; I am sure that is enough. Nobody would wish for more. But why should we not have the easiest kind of legal tender of all,—paper money of all values? A note for a penny and a note for 100,000*l.* would be equally convenient; and both more so than any coin whatever."

It was presently pointed out that paper-money being, in fact, circulating credit, and not a commodity, could not be made a standard, though it may represent a standard, and be used as its substitute. Bank-notes might, Mr. Craig observed, be made a legal tender, if so strictly convertible that their value should never vary from

that of the metal they represent. No means had yet been found to make such an identity of value permanent; and while any variation existed, all dealers in money would be exposed to the evils of a double standard. He supposed the country had had enough of the legal tender of an inconvertible paper currency.

"Has paper then ever been made a legal tender in this country?"

"It was rendered so to all practical purposes,—though not under the very terms,—by the Restriction Act. Bank of England notes were received as cash in all government transactions, and by almost all individuals after the crisis of 1797. The effect upon the country was much the same as if they had been avowedly legal tender; and it is thought that not one man in twenty was aware of their being any thing else."

"Nor is, to this day," observed the shopkeeper. "Every man in this town who holds Bank of England notes would be confounded if you told him that his creditors are no more obliged to be satisfied with payment in those notes than in Cavendish's rotten rags. Would you have them no longer a good tender for practical purposes, when the Bank returns to cash payments?"

"I think one kind of paper might be legal tender for another. Country bank-notes being made convertible into Bank of England notes instead of coin, might, as it seems to me, be a very good thing for all parties, (if the Bank is to continue to hold its present station and privileges,)—provided, of course, that this Bank of

England paper is strictly convertible into the precious metals."

"But would not that be hard upon the Bank of England? Should the Bank be thus made answerable for the issues of the country banks?"

"Nay; the hardship is under the present system; for, according to it, the Bank of England is made answerable, without having any of that power of control which it would have under the other system. We know that country bankers do not keep much coin in their coffers. As soon as a panic arises, they pledge or sell their government stock, and carry the notes they receive for it to be changed for gold at the Bank to answer the demands of their country customers. Thus the Bank is liable to a drain at any moment, without further limit than the stock held by all the country bankers. Now, as it need not issue more paper than it can convert on demand, it is not answerable for any proceedings of the country bankers, and holds a direct check over the issues of all who are not careless of their credit."

Hester had heard her husband tell how hard the Mint was worked during the panic, three years before. Demands for gold came in from the country so fast, that, though all the presses were at work, night and day, they could scarcely turn out coin enough to keep up the credit of the Bank: and the stock of bullion in the coffers got terribly low. At least, so it was suspected by the people at the Mint. How much of this outcry for gold did Mr. Craig think would be superseded by the customers of country banks

being referred to the Bank of England for metal money, instead of having it of their own bankers?

"As much," replied Mr. Craig, "as the Bank may choose. It can proportion its issues to country bankers as it likes. But, in case of the adoption of this plan, it will be necessary that branch banks should be established by the Bank of England in all populous districts, so that the people may have every facility for converting their notes. Much less business would be done, much less confidence would exist, if there were delays and difficulties of any kind in converting notes which are convertible at all."

"It is, then, only to prevent drains on the Bank of England coffers, and their consequences, that you would make its notes a legal tender for country paper? It seems to me odd,—likely to make confusion,—to have the same money,—the identical notes, legal tender in one sense and not in another."

"If any other method of obviating such a drain can be found which involves less inconvenience, let it be so; but this peril of a drain is so fearful that it would be worth trying a few experiments to be rid of it. If means could also be devised for permanently rendering paper the precise representative of gold, Bank of England notes might become a uniformly legal tender."

Hester supposed that to alter the value of the standard would be the worst measure of all; as its very name conveyed that it ought to be unchangeable. That which is used to measure the

values of all other things cannot have its own value changed without making confusion among all the rest. Mr. Craig replied that the necessity of changing the value of a standard was the great objection, as they had just agreed, to the use of a double standard, one or other part of which must be changed from time to time to make them perfectly equal. He went on,

"The most fatal blow that the government of a commercial nation can inflict upon the people is to alter the standard;—whether by changing the denominations of money, or by mixing more alloy with the precious metal of the coins, or, by issuing them, not less pure, but smaller. Of these three ways, the first is the most barefaced, and therefore the least mischievous in deceiving those who are injured; but the consequences of all in raising prices, in vitiating contracts, in introducing injustice into every unfinished act of exchange, and confusion into every new one, and consequently in overthrowing commercial credit, are alike fatal in all times, and under all circumstances."

"And yet many governments have tried the experiment, after watching the effects upon their neighbours."

"Yes. Each hopes to avoid the retribution which has overtaken the others: but, if they were wise, they would see why such retribution was inevitable. They would see that the temporary saving of their gold would soon be dearly paid for by the increased prices of whatever the go-

vernment has to buy; and that if they would meet this evil by an increase of taxation, their design must be baffled by the impoverishment of the people. They would prepare themselves to behold in every corner of the land, profligate debtors exulting in their advantage over their frugal and and laborious creditors, the aged servants of society stripped of the proceeds of their hoarded labour, the young brought up to witness the violable quality of public faith, and distrust of the government and of each other striking deep root into the heart of every class."

"Our government will, surely, never try such an experiment?"

"We are now, you know, suffering under the effects of such an one. When the Restriction Act passed, nobody said anything about this measure being, in fact, an alteration of the standard; but as inconvertible bank-notes are practically a legal tender, and as their value depends on the price of bullion and on the extent to which they are issued, these circumstances keep the standard, in fact, in a state of perpetual variation, instead of its being preserved invariable by law, as it pretends to be."

"So, then, my mother suffered from a variation in the standard when her pension was swallowed up by high prices; and farmer Martin is injured in the same way by an opposite change in the standard."

"And you, Mrs. Morrison," said the shopkeeper, "profit by the same thing; for, I assure

you, I must have obliged you to change one more note at least for that parcel of shirting, three years ago."

"Is it possible," asked Hester, "for the value of money to remain the same from one century to another?—O no; it certainly cannot; so many new mines as will be, discovered; and so much difference as there will be, as the arts improve, in the cost of producing the precious metals, and all other commodities. The value of metal money will gradually decline on the whole, I should think."

"Very likely."

"Then what will become of creditors? How are they to have their rights?"

"The equitable right of a creditor is only to the quantity of gold for which he contracted. If he is paid in less than this quantity, through any arbitrary interference, he is injured; but he must take the chance of any natural variation between the value of gold and other commodities. No law need pretend, or could avail, to fix this relative value, which depends on causes over which laws have no control. If a man enters into a long contract, he should take into his estimate the probability of money being worth less at the end than at the beginning of his bargain, if he satisfies himself that the value of money does, on the whole, deteriorate: and if he neglects to do this, he alone is to blame for his loss; for this is not a matter for government to charge itself with. If it ensures him his quantity, it has done its duty."

The shopkeeper looked round his shop with a sigh, and wished that, when he entered upon his lease, and filled his shelves, he had had no further loss to guard against than the natural decline of money. He had suffered, and was suffering from the present reverse tendency of money. He had bought his linens and flannels, his gloves, hose, and ribbons dear, and was now obliged to sell them cheap, while his rent was, though nominally the same, very much raised in fact. He was less grieved for himself, and such as himself, however, than for families like a certain one in the neighbourhood, which, through fluctuations in the currency, was reduced, without any fault, to a situation so far below what it ought to hold. He understood that though the D—— bank was likely to pay every shilling in time, it might have done so directly, but that the debts which were contracted in one state of the currency must be paid in another, while the property in which the partners had invested their capital had fallen in value, in proportion to the rise of money. It was too hard that the very crisis which destroyed their credit should have at the same time almost doubled their debts, and depreciated their property. He wished to know whether it was true, if Mr. Craig had no objection to tell him, that there was money owing to Mr. Berkeley from abroad—a debt which nobody had thought of recovering till lately, and which Mr. Horace was going into a foreign country to look after? Mr. Craig believed that there was some truth in what was said about the debt; but

none in the report of Horace's stirring in the matter. He then asked for what he came into the shop in search of;—a pair of gloves; and was furnished with some at what was mournfully declared to be considerably under prime cost.

Hester at the same time concluded her long task of shopping, and went to pay her respects to Mrs. Berkeley. She felt very full of wrath at all tamperers with the currency as she opened the little green gate, and mounted the single step at the door, and lifted the slender stiff knocker, and cast a glance over the red front of the house, as she was waiting for admission. All these things were in sad contrast to the approach to their former abode.

As she was shown in, she felt how much more she had been at her ease in old days, when, in visiting them, she found herself in the midst of unaccustomed luxuries, than now, when their abode was a good deal like her mother's. She scarcely knew how to be respectful enough to Mr. Berkeley when she saw him doing many things for himself that he had been used to have done for him, and when she heard of his performing his own little errands in the town, where his servant had of old been daily seen going to and fro for his bustling master. It was affecting to see Mrs. Berkeley reviving her knowledge and practice of many things which her condition of affluence had rendered it unnecessary for her to attend to for many years past.

She made no hardship of these things. She cheerfully said that she should want employment

in the absence of her daughters if she had not to attend to her household affairs. Mr. Berkeley was very exact about the matters of the table, and Mrs. Berkeley did again what she had done in her youth;—she made such hashes and ragouts and fancy dishes of various kinds, as no cook she had ever had could pretend to. She kept her work basket at her elbow almost as constantly as Mrs. Parndon herself; and with Lewis for a helper, made the most of the shallow poor soil in their little garden, undeterred by recollections of the beloved green-house and the flourishing rosary of her late abode. She was encouraged in this by finding that Mr. Berkeley did not dislike her roses, though they came out of a garden next the road, instead of his favourite nook.

He now, on seeing Hester in the parlour, came up to the window with a bunch of roses in one hand and the newspaper in the other. He brought news that the pyrus japonica looked drooping, and that a company of ants had found their way to the apricot at the back of the house. There must be an end to them, or there would be an end to the apricots for this year.

"You have found nothing so important to us as that in the newspaper, I dare say," observed his wife.

Mr. Berkeley threw the paper in at the window, peevishly declaring that there was nothing in newspapers worth reading now-a-days. He forgot that he did not think so at noon-time every day, when he was apt to swear at the

offender who happened to be five minutes past the time of bringing the paper.

"There is one piece of news, by the by," said he, "unless you have heard it already from Craig. Longe is married."

"Indeed! To Miss Egg?"

"No, no. Too good a match for him by half. A fellow who begins looking about him so impudently as he did, is sure to finish with marrying his cook."

"His cook! What, the servant that went from the Cavendishes. It never can be, surely?"

"Nay; I do not know whose cook she is, or whether any body's cook. I only know that such is the way such fellows pair themselves at last."

Hester was wondering what fellows;—rectors, or Cavendishes' cousins.—Mrs. Berkeley remarked, that she should wish to think well of the rector's lady for Henry Craig's sake. The curate should never be the worse off for the marriage of his rector.

"The curate's wife, you mean, my dear. You are looking forward to little presents of tithe pigs and apples, and an occasional pheasant. But, mind you, I will never touch a pheasant that comes out of Longe's house. I had rather be in the way of his gun myself."

Hester took this as a permission to speak of Melea's prospects,—happy prospects, as she called them.

"The young people talk of some such thing," said Mr. Berkeley, carelessly. "Young people always do, you know. But it is nonsense talk-

ing. Craig is as poor as a rat, and Melea will be long enough earning her wedding clothes." And he began hoeing up very diligently the weeds that were just visible in the border below the window. While he was not looking, Mrs. Berkeley held up with a smile the work she was doing. Hester had before observed that the work basket was piled very high.

"Is this for Miss Melea?" she delightedly enquired. Mrs. Berkeley nodded assent, and then gave the cautionary explanation that this was no sign that Melea was to be married soon, but only that a wedding wardrobe was not so very difficult to earn. She had pleasure in doing this work; it seemed to hasten the time when she and Mr. Berkeley should have a daughter near them once more.

Before they had time to pursue the topic, Mr. Berkeley came in, complaining of the heat. The first thing he did was to pick up the newspaper he had thrown away, fix himself in his reading light, give the paper the pat which was necessary to stiffen it in its full length, and mutter over it, as much at his ease as if nobody was by. Amidst the mutterings and occasional interjections, the other two carried on their conversation in an under tone. It was all about the curate, and the curate's house, and the curate's small accession of income, and large accession of pupils, which was as much for the advantage of Lewis in the way of companionship, as for Melea's, in a different way. At the close of a very cheerful picture of what was to be, Hester looked up and saw Mr. Berkeley still in reading

posture, but looking over his spectacles at his wife, and evidently listening to what was passing. As soon as he saw himself observed, he said, "Go on, my dear, pray. There is nobody here to be taken in by a fancy picture,—no novices that think people are all born to be married, and nothing else. Mrs. Morrison knows by this time that this is too cold a world for love to warm every corner of it. She knows—"

"I wonder you can be so unjust to Henry," cried Mrs. Berkeley, who saw that Hester did not altogether relish the appeal made to her. "You know very well that if Melea's engagement was at an end to-day, you would wander about the house like a ghost, and find that the world had grown much colder all in a moment."

"When did I ever say a word against Craig, pray?—at least, for more than three years. What I mean is, that the less people connect themselves, in such days as these, the better for them. That is the only way to slip through the world quietly, and to get out of it without having one's heart and soul torn to pieces before one's breath is out of one's body."

"You would not have daughters, Sir," Hester ventured to say. "You had rather be living all alone, with only your physician to feel your pulse when you die."

"Mr. Berkeley's daughters and Mr. Berkeley's wife are not like any other wife and daughters," said Mrs. Berkeley, smiling; "and Horace is also unique. Mr. Berkeley's doctrine is only generally applicable, you know; so we need not be offended."

"I never choose to be personal," observed Mr. Berkeley. "I point out nobody's wife and children as the proper ones not to exist. I only mean that it must be a heavenly thing to have only one's self to care for."

"I will believe it, my dear, when I find you in heaven, caring only for yourself."

"I only speak to what I know," replied Mr. Berkeley; "and, depend upon it, half the soft-hearted people that Craig and Melea are imitating, would be glad to shake off their vows and their cares together."

Hester bore his enquiring look very well; for she still loved Edgar. She smiled, and hoped that these were not the notions Melea was to be entertained with when she came home to be married.

"I say what I think, let who will be by," replied Mr. Berkeley. "But it does not signify whether I hold my tongue or speak. We are all made romantic when we are young, that we may be broken down with cares, in time to make room for others to go the same round. I and my children, like everybody else.—My dear, do send some one to destroy that ants' nest. They are eating the apricots all this time.—Stay. I'll do it myself."

In another minute, he was busy with the ants, and Hester was left at liberty to hope that Melea might, by some chance, be happy, notwithstanding the romance of loving Henry Craig.

Fanny was, she found, pronounced much wiser, and more likely to die a natural death, as she was not going to be married. It was very

true that she had at present few cares, though she had not yet seriously taken her father's advice to care for nobody but herself. She bestowed some little thought and feeling on her pupils, and on her family. What romance she had tended that way; but as it afforded no threatening of ultimately breaking her down with solicitude, her father acquiesced in her cheerful looks and even spirits, and thought this kind of romance very harmless.

These facts being fully ascertained, Hester took her leave before the last hapless insect had been hunted from its retreat in the shadow of an apricot leaf. Soon after she was gone, Mrs. Berkeley missed the apex of the pyramid of which her work basket formed the base. It was clear that Hester intended that the bride's wardrobe should be graced with some of her handy work. She had, indeed, carried off enough to employ her needle for as long a time as Edgar was likely to allow her to stay. When Mrs. Berkeley sent to beg that she would not consume her short leisure in an employment that she must have quite enough of at home, she replied that it was a most refreshing rest to her to sit at work by the open window, in the long summer afternoons, enjoying the smell of the sweet-williams in the court, and the striking of the old clock, and hearing from her mother and the neighbours long stories of all that had happened in Haleham since her wedding-day.

Chapter III.

SUSPICION.

Edgar did not send for his wife at the end of a week, as she had expected. Mrs. Parndon was much pleased at this. The first Sunday had been so wet that it would have been a pity for Hester to risk spoiling her new silk, and a still greater pity to have gone back to London without appearing at church in it. It was earnestly to be desired that she should stay over a second Sunday. Happily she did so; and yet more to her astonishment, over a third. There was nothing to make her uneasy in this extension of indulgence. Her husband wrote to her, kindly, and often enough to satisfy her mother, and the enquirers at the post-office, who thought they might contrive, by a little watching and waiting, thus to learn more of Hester's domestic position than they could well ascertain by any questions they could put to her mother or herself.

As Mrs. Morrison recovered her bloom and spirits, day by day, it was a settled matter that her paleness, thinness, and odd, startled look, (so unlike any thing that used to be seen in her face) were all owing to the heats of a London summer, and that she was indeed the fortunate person she had been described by all mothers to their daughters for these three years. Hester herself bestowed as little thought as she could on this question while at liberty to enjoy air and free-

dom. She ran in the meadows as if she had been still a girl; played ducks and drakes on the Martins' pond, and tripped along the street with a step which her mother thought not dignified enough for Mrs. Edgar Morrison.

Forgetting this hint, she was quickly passing Enoch's door one day, when she saw a finger, which from its length could not be mistaken, beckoning between two of the books in the window. She went in, and there was Mr. Pye, alone, saying several times over that he wished to speak with her, that he had a trifling thing to mention, a little matter to say between themselves. He declared himself very scrupulous, but knew she would be angry if he passed the thing over. What could be the matter? Had she, or anybody belonging to her, done anything to offend Mr. Pye?—Bless her! no. How would that be possible? He was only afraid of the offence being the other way. When compelled to explain, he said he did it directly, because he supposed, he trusted, he should be saving her from a loss. Could she remember where she took the 1*l.* note she had paid him with? He hoped it was not too late to get it changed; for it was certainly a bad one.

Indeed! O yes, she remembered perfectly. It was given her by——. She stopped short in a fit of prudence, for which she could afterwards hardly account. No. She would not answer for anything about it, till she had looked over her stock at home. She would just step home and bring another directly. Mr. Pye was quite

right in supposing that she would have been angry if he had scrupled to mention it. It was much better to settle those little mistakes at once, since they do rest on the mind for a long time.—Just as she was leaving the shop, in the midst of Enoch's assurances that there was no hurry, and that he could not allow her to go home on purpose, she turned back to ask for the note, saying that she had always had a great curiosity to see a forged note; and that she never felt herself safe in taking notes, from her ignorance of the proper marks.

Mr. Pye liked giving lessons; and he set about his task on the present occasion in a most orderly manner. Happily, he first made Hester sit down; and next, he fortunately took such pains to rub and fix his spectacles, as to have no attention to spare for her face. He then unlocked his desk, and brought out an honest Bank of England note: then double-unlocked an inner recess, from which issued the offending one. Both were spread before Hester, and she was told to compare them, and try whether she could discover any difference.

She could perceive none. The leading marks of each were alike; and Hester thought they were such as any engraver might imitate. It appeared to her to signify little, that there were private marks, and water-marks which were less easy to imitate than the engraved parts. These might enable the Bank to know its own notes; but were of no use to the generality of people to whom it is of consequence to distinguish a good note from a bad one.

"You see," said Enoch, holding the notes up to the light. "That water-mark, you observe, is very different from this; and the finish of that word, you perceive, is not imitated well in the forgery."

"I see, now you point it out: but I should never have discovered it. Surely, people in general, shopmen and servants, and market people, do not know these signs as you do."

Enoch complacently answered that very few had so practised an eye as his.

"But that is very wrong, surely?" observed Hester. "It must be possible to form notes of such a kind of engraving as would be too difficult to make it worth while to forge; of such a kind too as would strike the eye at once, so that even those who cannot read may learn to know a good note. What can look easier than to imitate such a note as this? The very sight of it is enough to tempt people to forge."

Enoch observed that it was very true, and that it was proved by the dreadful increase of convictions on account of the crime of forgery. In the year of the Restriction Act, there was only one conviction; the number increased as bank notes became more important as a medium of exchange; and, in the preceding year, there had been no less than two hundred and twenty-seven; sixty-two of which had been capital convictions for the actual commission of the crime, and the others for having had forged notes in possession.

Hester's deep but checked sigh attracted Enoch's attention.

"Ah! you are sighing for the convictions that are yet to come. But, my dear, they are clever fellows who made this note; and they will keep out of harm's way for some time to come, depend upon it. It is a very superior article indeed; not got up by one or two in a snug way, but regularly manufactured in a business-like manner. I should not wonder if they keep themselves safe till the Bank calls in its one and two pound notes, and puts an end to their trade. I see there is talk of abolishing the small note circulation."

"I am glad of it, I am sure. The sooner the better."

"Well, now, I do not agree with you there. We shall lose a great convenience in losing these notes. O, I do not mean for a moment to say that it is worth having sixty men hanged in a year for the sake of it. God forbid! But there might be means found of preventing so much forgery. There might be an end of temptation to novices to forge; and as for those who have learned the trade already, they will not injure society long."

"You mean that they will grow honest again when the temptation is removed."

Enoch shook his head, and wished he could truly say that this was what he meant. He meant that people employed in such practices rarely quit them till they have brought punishment upon themselves. However sorry we may be for the carelessness and bad management by which temptation was at first made too strong

for them, however we pity them, and make allowance for their first acts, we may be pretty sure that they will end by falling into the hands of the law. Hester might well sigh for the makers of this note; for though new bank regulations should knock up their paper manufacture, they would turn to something else as bad, —forging bills of exchange, or stealing and passing them in a business-like way, or perhaps coining. Having once been used to get a great deal of money by dishonest means, they would not be satisfied with the little they could obtain by honest industry.

Hester, not wishing for more speculation of this kind, rose to go; and with some difficulty, got leave to carry away the bad note, in order, as she truly said, to study her lesson more carefully at home. Enoch charged her to bring it back again; but to this she made no reply.

She just returned to say,

"Do not let us mention this to my mother. It will vex her to think of my having lost a pound in such a way; and I am not at all sure that I can get the note changed."

Enoch was quite willing to be silent. Not having made up his mind himself as to whether he ought to have put up with the loss in quiet for the sake of an old friend, he was well content that Mrs. Parndon should not have the opportunity of blaming him.

Hester hurried home, and into her own chamber, bolting the door after her. At every step on the way, some new circumstance occurred to

her recollection, confirming the horrible suspicion which had entered her mind. Edgar's sudden and strange command of money, his unwonted kindness and liberality, his preventing her sending one of these notes to the coach-office in payment for her place, his anxiety that she should lay out the whole in a distant country town for goods which could be better bought in the street they lived in,—all these circumstances seemed to be explained only too satisfactorily if the new notion she had in her head were true. In a paroxysm of resolution she proceeded to put it to the proof, looking about before she unlocked her money-drawer, to make sure that no one could see from any corner of the window, or from the key-hole, what she was about to do. Hester was not, however, very strong-minded. The first sight of the thin paper made her heart-sick. She thrust the bad note into the opposite corner of the drawer, and locked it up, feeling that for this one day she preferred suspense to certainty. Enoch must be paid. That was something to do. She would run and pay him directly, if she had but silver enough. She began counting her silver; in the midst of which operation, some one was heard trying at the door, and was answered by a long scream from within.

"Mercy on us! what's the matter?" cried the widow.

"Nothing: why nothing, mother," said Hester, opening the door, "only you startled me, that's all, mother."

"Startled you indeed! Why, you are shaking

all over, child. What could you be doing? I came just to darn that hole in your window curtain while you were out, for I thought you were gone to the Martins an hour ago. What could you be doing, my dear?"

"I was looking out some change. I want some change. Can you lend me half a crown? No: five shillings I want. No, no, four will do. Can you lend me four shillings?"

"Indeed I cannot," replied her mother, laughing. "With all your stock of money, you can get change from every shop in the town, and I like the appearance of your sending for it. Nanny shall step to the baker's in a minute. Give me a note, and I will send her."

Hester went into the kitchen, apparently to save her mother the trouble; but it was to borrow four shillings of Nanny, instead of sending her to the baker's for twenty.

Enoch was jocose upon her paying him in silver lest she should make the same mistake again, though the chances were a thousand to one against another bad note falling in her way while the small note circulation lasted.

It was a beautiful day, as fresh as mild, and the country was in the perfection of its summer beauty. In order to avoid going home, Hester proceeded to the Martins, and staid till the latest moment she could without keeping her mother waiting for dinner. The summer wind blew away half her cares before she reached the farm; and by the time she left it, she pronounced herself the silliest person in the world for having

taken up such a wild fancy as had terrified her this morning.

Rhoda had not yet left her father's house, nor was likely to do so at present. Her lover had employment, but had not yet nearly repaired the losses which Cavendish's villany had caused him, and Martin was not now so well able as formerly to enter into engagements to assist his daughter. His rent pressed heavily, now that prices had fallen so much; and the young people must wait. This sentence fell irritatingly upon Rhoda's ear, month after month; —every Saturday night, when the farmer and his wife ascertained how much or how little was ready to go into the rent-purse, and every Sunday when Chapman brought her home from a long ramble in the lanes, whose turns and windings had lost the charms they possessed for her when she began to follow them in his company, four years ago. She should not have minded, she told Hester, if she had known from the beginning that they must wait five years: it was the disappointment, the suspense, that was so cruel; and she sometimes wished that they had married on Cavendish's coming. They could but have been ruined by the failure, like many other people; her little legacy would have been safe in the shape of furniture; and they could not well have been more anxious than they were now. Hester sagely took up Mr. Berkeley's argument on these occasions, and tried very perseveringly to persuade Rhoda that she and Chapman were comfortably free from care, and that they ought to be very glad that they were not married yet.

Rhoda was equally sure that Hester could have no cares; how should she, with a husband so fond of her that he could not part with her oftener than once in four years, and in possession of a good salaried office, and with no children to provide for, and all so comfortable about her,—to judge from her dress, and the money she had spent at Haleham?

Thus these two school companions went forth this morning, arm in arm, to look after some farm-house pet that had strayed out upon the heath. Each was old in cares though young in years, and each fully persuaded that the other must be easy and gay at heart, in comparison with herself.—Mrs. Martin looked after them from the door of the dairy, as they took their way from the shady nook in which she stood through the orchard, and out upon the heath behind. She shook her head as she watched them, and thought to herself that theirs was not the step with which she went about her work and her pleasures at their age. There was little of girlhood remaining in the heavy gait and absent air with which they walked. There was something wrong in the state of things which took from life the ease and graces of its prime. It was a pity that Mrs. Martin was not within sight of the young women half an hour afterwards, when the summer wind had refreshed their spirits, and made old merry thoughts chase one another over their minds like the wrinkles on the surface of the blue pond which lay open to the breeze. If she had seen them running round the brink to

drive the waddling ducks into the water, or watching the sand-martins to their holes, or cherishing the rich brown hairy caterpillar that Hester had nearly trodden upon, or forgetting what they came for in counting how many little orange butterflies were perched at once upon the same gorse bush, she would have been satisfied that to be turned loose upon the heath in a west wind is a certain cure for the cares of the heart. Rhoda had the impression of being still a schoolgirl all the while; and Hester forgot her suspicion for as much as ten minutes at a time; and when she remembered it again, thought it too absurd to be dwelt upon any more. As if nobody had ever chanced to take a bad note before! As if it was not very likely that in so large a parcel as Edgar had given her, there might be one bad among many good! and at the cheering idea, she gave a new bound upon the turf, and began another race with the butterflies. The two mothers were pleased with the aspect of their respective daughters on their return; Rhoda with her hair blown about her glowing face, and Hester with an arm full of wild flowers, gathered partly from the heath, and partly from the hedges and ditches she had skirted on her way home.

Mrs. Parndon smilingly held up a letter: but Hester did not snatch it as usual. She received it with an absent look, and carried it into her chamber without first breaking the seal. In a moment she was heard saying,

"Don't put off dinner, mother. I will just

take off my bonnet, and read my letter afterwards; and I have kept you waiting already." And she actually sat down to dinner without having opened her letter. The sight of the hand had revived all her painful feelings, and had put it into her head that if she remained unsatisfied about the notes, and if her husband should strangely give her further leave of absence, she should go back at once, and have an end put to her suspense.

The letter was short. Edgar was glad she was enjoying herself in the country; believed the weather had been very fine and seasonable; did not see why she should hurry back; was not, for his own part, anxious that she should; was always willing to accommodate; therefore begged she would stay where she was; Philip and self quite well; London cursedly dull; everybody looking blank about the times; and no wonder. —The west wind did not blow into Hester's chamber; nor, if it had found a way, would it now have acted as a cordial. It was too late to get rid of her suspicions. There was nothing for it but satisfying them. The door was again bolted, the blind drawn down, a glass of water poured out, and the locked drawer opened. There was first a nervous and hasty comparison of all the notes with the forged one; then a more careful examination; then the most deliberate and studious one. The result of all was the same. The same deficiencies, the same wrong turns were in all the notes. All were precisely alike, except that some had been more crumpled and dirtied

than others; and the soil was, she thought, put on artificially.—She was resolved to go the next morning, and to let it be supposed that her husband had recalled her.

But what to do for money! She had borrowed four shillings, and had nothing left but these notes. Asking her mother for some was out of the question, if she wished to avoid suspicion. Leaving this difficulty to be met by some bright idea at the moment, she swallowed some cold water, and re-appeared with her bonnet on, saying that she was going to bespeak a place in the morning's coach, as she must be at home before the next night.

Mrs. Parndon began reproaching Edgar very bitterly for giving such short notice; from which, of course, his wife very earnestly defended him, strong on the secret ground that he had given no notice at all. Mrs. Parndon laid down the law, notwithstanding, that all husbands are alike, all arbitrary, and fond of showing what their power is; also that she could not spare her daughter even to go so far as the coach-office; which errand could be as well discharged by Nanny; no money being wanted for deposit, as the coach merely passed through instead of starting from Haleham, and there was no knowing till it drove up whether there would be a place.

"Now, my dear, before we are interrupted," said Mrs. Parndon, when Nanny was out of the house, "I have a little business to settle with you, which I did not intend to have brought on in such a hurry, but for Edgar's choosing to have

you at his beck and call in this way. You know," (in a whisper,) "that when gold was disappearing some time ago, I laid by some guineas."

Hester perfectly remembered. They were either in the cupboard behind the bed, she believed, or buried in the garden. They had been in both these hiding places, she knew; but she forgot which last. The widow looked wise, and said it did not signify where they now were; what she wanted to say was this. She had always been a cautious woman, having no one to advise with but Mr. Pye, whom she could not, from motives of delicacy, inform of her having money laid by; and she had, she feared, let the occasion pass for disposing of her gold to the greatest advantage. She should have trusted Philip with it some time ago. She had lately, however, put the case before Mr. Pye, as from a third unknown party, and he was decidedly of opinion that there would be no use in hoarding gold after the Bank had returned to cash payments; and that if any profit was to be made in such a way, it must be before that time. So she had made up her mind to trust her daughter with her treasure, in order to its reaching Philip's hands; and she should write to him to send her as much as could be obtained over and above their value as legal coin. It was a sad pity, to be sure, that she had not done this long and long ago; but lone women are liable to fall into grievous mistakes in the management of their affairs. It was not enough even to have such a friend as Mr. Pye.

As a friend merely,—Hester supposed in her own mind. She was very happy that so lucky a chance of getting money for her journey had turned up as to prevent her having to use any of her doubtful notes. She hurried off with her mother to fetch the guineas, resolving to get two of them changed at some shop where Mrs. Parndon did not deal, and to send out of her own earnings what Philip should declare to be their true value.

When the bed-tick had been unripped and properly sewn up again, after the guineas had been taken out of it, the widow found time and thoughts for what her daughter might have to do and feel on so sudden a conclusion of her visit. Could she do anything for her? pay any little bills after she was gone? pack her things this afternoon? or go and tell their friends that if they wished to bid her good bye they must come in after tea?

Hester accepted the offer of packing, in order to be free to go out herself. She talked of stepping to the washer-woman's, and of getting as far as the Berkeleys, to pay her respects, carry home the work she had finished, and say how sorry she was that she should not see Miss Melea married, as she had always hoped to do.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Parndon, while they were waiting the next morning for the coach to drive up, "I wonder when we shall have you amongst us again!"

Mr. Pye, who was present, saw that Hester's eyes were full of tears, and concluding that her

mother had said something pathetic, turned to the bright side, as he thought, and expatiated on the delight that awaited her that evening in reaching her home again, and how Edgar's reception of her would more than make up for the sadness her Haleham friends caused her by their parting grief.

"You will come to town on business again, Mr. Pye? You will be looking in upon me some day, I dare say?"

Mr. Pye was ready to own that London was not to him what it used to appear; or perhaps it might be that he was not so fit for London as he was. The very walking along Cheapside flurried him, and he was nervous about the crossings, and people seemed to think him stupid; whereas he used to be considered tolerably apt at whatever business he had to transact. Hester understood that this was the irritation of infirmity, and said no more about his leaving home. Her mother, however, put in her word.

"O, Mr. Pye, you will be sure to go, one of these days. And you should be very much flattered at Mrs. Morrison's saying anything about it. I assure you, she has not invited me."

This was the last hint Hester had the pleasure of hearing before she took her seat, and went on her dreary way.

Chapter IV.

THE WIFE'S RETURN.

Even the journey was less dreary than the arrival. Hester had hoped that Edgar would be out, that she might settle herself, and be ready to give him a wife-like greeting on his entrance. She trusted much to this for forgiveness for having come home without leave and without warning.

The house door was open, and there were pails and trestles in the passage, and a strong smell of paint. Remorse struck instantly upon Hester's heart. Edgar was making the house neat and pretty to surprise her on her return, and she was rewarding him with suspicion and disappointment.

For one moment she glanced in thought at the possibility of going back as quietly as she might, and keeping her trip a secret: but this would have been too remarkable a proceeding to escape painful remark. She must go on now, and make the best of it.

The first person she met was a foot-boy, who said he belonged to the house, but who was a stranger to her. It occurred to her that Edgar might have removed, and she had perceived that a new, stout, oaken-door had been put up some feet within the passage; an alteration scarcely likely to occur as desirable to a man so perpetually absent from home as Edgar, and who

lived up stairs. The boy, however, declared that his master's name was Morrison, and that he was now in the house, taking his wine with a gentleman, after dinner.

"Philip, no doubt," thought Hester, hastily dismissing the porter, and running up to the dining-room before her courage failed. She was not sorry that Philip would be there to act as a restraint on their meeting. Edgar's back was towards her as she softly opened the door; and as he concluded it could be nobody but the boy, he did not dislodge his legs from the chair on which they reposed, or cease picking his strawberries. Opposite to him, sitting bolt upright, and his little face looking fierce in a pair of huge black whiskers, sat Cavendish! His start and stare first roused Edgar.

"What the deuce——" he began. "Did not you get my letter? You must have got my letter, bidding you—telling you that you might stay longer."

"I did; but . . . . I will tell you all about it by and by. I beg your pardon for bursting in: but I did not know you had any one with you, except Philip. I will go up stairs till you are at liberty."

"Aye, do."

Before the door was well shut, however, she was called back and told that she would scarcely know her away about the house after all that the work-people had been doing. She had better come in and sit down till she could be instructed how to turn herself about in her own home.

She sat down accordingly by the window, thinking it would best please Edgar that she should not be in full view of Cavendish's face. When she had been offered wine and strawberries, and accepted the latter in consideration of her burning thirst, the two at the table seemed to have nothing more to say to each other. They dropped a few words now and then, which each left it to Hester to answer; and, in a quarter of an hour, Cavendish rose to go. Edgar whispered with him for some time outside the door, and then, to his wife's terror, came in and shut it. She could not help fixing her eyes upon his, though there was anger in his face.

"You are displeased with me for coming home," said she. "And I dare say it was very foolish, and you will think me very unkind: but O! Edgar, you cannot think how uneasy I have been since yesterday morning! Those bank-notes——"

"What of them?" asked Edgar, looking steadily at her.

"Mr. Pye said they were bad: that is, he said that one of them was bad——"

Edgar laughed violently. "So you have taken a journey——"

"I know what you will say . . . . . I know how easy it is to make a laugh of it," said Hester, sinking into tears: "but Mr. Pye showed me,——Edgar!" and she put a strong momentary control upon her convulsive sobs, "Edgar, they are all bad,—all that I have left."

"And who gave you leave to show off your

money to Mr. Pye, or Mr. Any-body ? A pretty scrape you have brought me into !"

When Hester explained how she had kept her cares to herself, and Mr. Pye had seen only one note, her husband attempted to ridicule her out of the notion that had taken possession of her ; but this was attempting too much. For once, the gentle, tractable Hester appeared sullen. She sat looking out of the window, and twisting the corner of her handkerchief, till Edgar was tired of talking to her.

" Well, Madam," said he at length : " you do not seem disposed to make any answer. What would you have now ?"

Hester turned full round upon him to ask if he really wished to know what she would have. Edgar could only look rather silly, and ay " To be sure."

" I would have your confidence, Edgar, as a wife should have. I have kept your secrets (those that you could not help my knowing) long enough, I am sure, to show that I may be trusted. Let you have done what you may, I am the one who ought to know all ; for I may screen you from shame, and I must share your shame when it comes. I am not one to betray you, Edgar. I am your wife, and far more ready to excuse and forgive your—your—ways than you yourself will one day be to excuse them."

" Women do not know what they ask for when they seek their husbands' confidence," said Edgar. " As soon as they have got it, they would be glad enough to have been less curious."

"Curious!" repeated Hester, offended at the word. "If it were curiosity, I might get the Newgate calendar, or set Philip talking, as he likes to do, by the three hours together about making money in an unlawful way."—(She could not bring herself to utter the word "forgery.")—"You think, I suppose, that it is curiosity that brought me home to-day."

It was some damned troublesome thing, whether it was curiosity or anything else, Edgar swore. Hester trembled while she said that she could go back again, if he chose it; but that she had much rather stay and help him.

"Help me!" exclaimed Edgar. "What do you mean by helping me?"

"Is it such a very new thing for wives to help their husbands?" Hester asked. "I mean, however, that whatever you are concerned in, I wish to be concerned in too. I do not want to be a spy. I want to be your wife. Let me help you to make notes, or send me quite away. I cannot bear to be in the house, and know what you are doing, and have none of your confidence, and no one to open my mind to."

As it was evidently too late to attempt to conceal the fact from her, Edgar saw at once that it would be the safest plan to keep her at home, and to implicate her so far as to secure her fidelity. He drew a chair beside her, preparatory to giving what he called "a candid explanation."

"You must see, my love, that it is not for my own sake that I have placed myself in the cir-

cumstances you have unfortunately become acquainted with."

"O, certainly. It was not for your own sake that you took a sudden fit of affection for me lately, and remembered that I had not breathed country air for four years. It was not for your own sake that you pressed your money upon me, and wished that I should spend it among my old friends. O no; this was all for my sake, and for the good of the Halcham people. I understand it all quite well," said the miserable wife.

"If you looked about you while you were at Haleham, you must have understood," said Edgar, "that there is no way of doing so much good just now as by putting out money. Did you not find a terrible want of it every where? especially of small notes?—Well. Everybody sees and feels the same thing; and the country is full of discontent at the currency being so deplorably contracted as it is now. Of course, this discontent will be listened to in time, and the bank will meet the popular demand. In the mean while, those are benefactors to society who supply the want as far as they can. It is a dangerous service, Hester; but it is a very important one, I assure you."

Hester was not to be quite so easily taken in; but she would not check her husband's communication by raising any objections. He went on.

"You must have seen, if you spent the notes as I desired, how acceptable they were at Haleham; how brisk they made the business there; how——"

"Just like the first issue of Cavendish's notes," observed Hester.

"But there is this difference, my dear. Our notes are not those of a bank that will break. There will not be a crash——"

"No; only a dead loss to the holders who present them at the Bank of England, or who find them out on going home from shopping or market. Only a stain upon commercial character,—a shock to commercial credit. Only a gain to us of whatever is lost by these holders, or by the Bank of England. Only a robbery of them to enrich ourselves. I understand."

"I am sure you do not, if you talk of my gains," replied Edgar. "Why, my dear, the wealth of the Bank would not make up to me for the risk and trouble of passing notes. And when you see what we have been doing upstairs, you will be convinced that our expenses——"

"Very well," said Hester, quietly; "I do not want convincing. Tell me what part I am to take. You may trust me for being very careful; for I am as well aware as you what is at stake. I do not know whether my being able to draw will be of any use to you."

"I am not sure but it may," replied Edgar. "Your best way of helping us, however, will be in doing our out-door work: in making our purchases; in——"

"In passing your notes, you mean. I am afraid,—— I have so little presence of mind ——." The sight of Edgar's grave looks reminded her to make no difficulties; and she

went on. "However, I can plan what to say when they refuse a note; and when they make no difficulty, there is only the fear to go through: and that is not so bad as not being trusted. I can do anything, if I am trusted."

"Had not you better go upstairs, and see what we have been doing?" said Edgar. "And yet,—perhaps,—it may turn out a safer thing for you to be able to swear that you never saw our apparatus, or set foot on that floor, since ——"

"I must know all now," said Hester, rising: "and as for swearing,—when one is once in, ——"

"True, true," replied her husband, astonished at her calmness, and beginning to think that he had mistaken his companion's capabilities all this while. "There are the keys. Go and look about you; and I will explain it all when you come down."

"I suppose," said Hester, returning from the door, "I suppose the gentleman who dined with you shares the office that I am to have. He does your out-door business too, does not he?"

"Who, Carter? What made you think so? He travels for a paper-maker."

"Carter!" exclaimed Hester, reproachfully. "Edgar, you will gain nothing by such half-confidences as yours. You think because Cavendish now wears black whiskers, and because I sat behind him, that I should not know him. How blind you must think me!"

Edgar protested that he meant no deceit, but that he had been so used of late to call Caven-

dish by his new name, as to forget that he had ever been known by any other. He begged that Hester would be particularly careful to address him properly on all occasions, and also to spare his feelings by avoiding any allusion to Haleham and its inhabitants. Hester readily promised this, feeling that there would be little temptation to mention Rhoda and her lover, or any of their injured neighbours, in the presence of the swindler, whose sensibility had come somewhat too late to be of any advantage to them.

The rooms on the floor above were so altered that she could scarcely believe she was in the same house she had inhabited for years. The windows were blocked up, and each room lighted by a skylight, so built round, as she afterwards discovered, as to be nearly inaccessible from the roof; and when got at, so fenced with iron bars as to make entrance from above a work of considerable time and difficulty. There were new doors to both rooms, and another within a few feet of the head of the stairs; and all were of the same make with the strange door in the passage below;—thick oak doors, with abundance of bolts, and cross bars which slipped into holes in the solid walls. A new ladder, just long enough to reach the ceiling, stood in each room, which made Hester suppose that either the skylight could be opened from within, so as to afford a way of escape, or that there must be a concealed trap-door for the same purpose. The remaining furniture of the room would have told

the most careless observer that no ordinary business was carried on there. There was a brick stove, built apparently to sustain a considerable heat; and there were rollers, such as are used in copper-plate printing. One of the keys on the bunch opened a closet wherein were iron frames, the size of bank-notes, with ivory numbers fixed in by a screw; copper-plates, with boards and cloths for taking impressions, jars of printing ink, and the flannel jackets of those who were to use it. A recess which had formerly held lumber, had been emptied to make room for a store of coke. There was such completeness and such amplitude about the apparatus, that Hester was convinced a large gang must be implicated in her husband's proceedings. If it had not been for this, she would probably have turned faint-hearted, and run away to Haleham after all:—faint-hearted, not on account of the danger, but of the guilt. But she felt something so imposing in the magnitude of these preparations for breaking the law, that, like too many people, she lost sight of much of the guilt in the feeling of extensive companionship. She had some dread of learning who the rest of the gang were; and did not at all like Cavendish being one of them, as she concluded he was.

Her husband made occasion to ask, the same evening, how she came to fancy that Carter had anything to do with his private affairs. He had told her that Carter travelled for a paper-making concern, and he now added that he lived in Yorkshire, and had merely taken a dinner in a friendly

way while in town on one of his business journeys. This satisfied Hester, who did not remember at the moment what different kinds of paper are made; and that paper is one of the elements of a bank-note.

She was now uneasy until she should have discharged her mother's commission about the guineas. As a first step, she enquired of her husband whether Philip knew of all the proceedings that went on in his own house; and was told that he must be aware that there was something doing, about which it was better, for his own sake, not to ask, or to give any information; but that no confidence had been placed in him which could implicate him in any way. This determined Hester to trust him to value and exchange the guineas; and to delay speaking to him about it no longer than till her husband should be gone to business the next morning.

When Edgar had duly found fault with her for rising with red eyes, because it would prevent her going out to spend notes with the proper face of indifference; when he had looked to the fastenings of the new door above, and told her that nobody would be there till the white-washers had departed from below; when she had watched him along the street so as to be pretty sure that he would not return, she ventured down, and put her head in at the private door of the shop to see if Philip was alone. He was alone; and bending so intently over his work as to give his invariable start when spoken to.

"Are you too busy to let me speak with you?"

"Why, no: I cannot well say that I am; though many's the time I could have said so when you have come. But those were better days than we shall soon see again."

"Is your business doing badly, like other people's? I thought you had got up a steady, flourishing business, that, depending on the wealthy, was not liable to be affected as inferior ones are."

"There is no business that has not its bad times; and those of the goldsmiths are now coming; or rather, have come. It is not only that people have less money to spend on trinkets, (which is true of the rich as well as others) but gold is so much dearer of late that the change of times tells both ways for those who deal in whatever is made of gold."

"Aye, I see. If people could not now buy trinkets at your former prices, much less can they at a higher price."

"And if the bank begins paying in cash," resumed Philip, "I am afraid gold will be very scarce and dear for our handicraft purposes. One hears nothing now of buying and selling guineas. Do you know," he continued, lowering his voice, "I have not had a single offer of coin to sell for months."

"So much the better for one who wishes to deal with you in that way," observed Hester. "If gold is scarce, you will give a good price for a batch of guineas."

"That depends upon what commodity I pay in," replied Philip. "If in goods, all very well:

if in bank paper, you will remember that that is scarce too. Guineas are now worth only a trifle more than bank-notes; and since it is so, I cannot but wonder that anybody has them to sell. Anybody that thought of doing so should have done it many months,—aye, full three years ago, to have made the best bargain."

"My mother knows that now. It is she that sends you this bag of coin," said Hester, producing the treasure. "She must have notes for it, of course, and not goods; and I am sure, Philip, you will give her as much as you can afford, in consideration of her disappointment from having kept them too long."

"That I will," said Philip, "and more than I would give anybody else. It will be a good opportunity of giving her a present, which I was thinking of doing about this time. Which do you think she will like best,—to have as much as I suppose she expects for her guineas, or to have little above the same number of one pound notes, and a present of some pretty thing out of my stock?"

Hester rather thought her mother would prefer an exemption from disappointment to a testimony of remembrance from her son. All mothers would not have given cause to be thus judged; nor would all sons have received so mortifying an opinion with the indifference which Philip exhibited. The whole affair was to him a matter of business; the devising the present, the manner in which it should be bestowed, and finally, the way in which it would be accepted.

"Let me see," said he, pondering his bargain. "What should I give to anybody else? Here is paper money now within 2½ per cent. of gold: but likely to fall a bit, I fancy, before the Bank begins its cash payments, if it ever does such a thing."

"And how low had paper fallen when guineas sold best?" enquired Hester.

"Why, paper money is worth nearly 23 per cent. more now than it was in 1814. That was the year when my mother should have disposed of her hoard. Paper has risen so high, you see, that government thinks it a good time to fix its value by making Bank of England notes payable in cash. As far as the present value of paper is concerned, it may be a good time; but it is a bad time on other accounts."

"Why? I should have thought it one of the best that could be chosen. There are no armies to be paid abroad. Think what a quantity of coin it must have taken to pay our soldiers on the continent during the war! Then there is, in the midst of all the distress that is complained of, some degree of that security and steadiness which follow upon a peace; and the gold that was hoarded is now brought out for use. All these circumstances seem likely to help the Bank to pay in specie. I should have thought this a particularly good time to begin again."

"Aye; that is because you do not know. There has been a falling off from the mines lately; and this is just the time that several foreign states have chosen for calling in some of their paper

currency. Gold would be getting dearer from these causes, even if we did not want to buy more than usual of it. But wanting, as we do, thirty millions in gold, what can we expect but that it should be very dear!"

"Where are these thirty millions to come from?"

"Part from one place, and part from another. Here are some out of my mother's mattress, you see; and more will come from the mines, and the rest from various countries where we deal."

"I could fancy thirty millions an immense sum to come from one place,—out of one market," observed Hester: "but if it is to be gathered together out of the whole world, I should think it would hardly be missed so as to raise the price of gold very much. It must be so little in comparison with the whole quantity that is in use!"

"I have heard that, supposing we look abroad for two-thirds of the metal wanted, (finding the other third at home,) we shall buy about one twenty-fifth part of what is in use. To be sure, this is not likely to raise the price very terribly; but there are people who say it will."

"The same people, perhaps, who have always been very sure that the Bank never would pay in coin. These very persons are the most likely to be crying out, ten years hence, that the Bank had much better not have begun paying in coin."

"O yes! They will go on complaining, as they do now, that the value of the currency has to be raised. But, for my part, I think that if

we are ever to be made secure against the same troubles happening over again with the currency, it had best be when gold and paper have come within a little of the same value. I should not be afraid of fixing our paper when it comes within five per cent. of gold, one way or the other; and, as I said, it is now within two and a half. Not that I would warrant our being safe yet, even if the Bank paid every note in gold to-morrow. There are people who think that more mischief will come yet."

"Well; pray reckon my mother's money without taking any future mischief into the account."

Philip nodded, and pursued his calculations. In due time, he made a declaration of the sum, in pounds, shillings, pence, and farthings, which he could afford for the gold. With a little stimulus from his sister, he came to a resolution to make it up such an even sum as might travel by post in the shape of a single bank-note; by which means Hester's mind would be eased of her commission, and Mrs. Parndon's relieved from suspense without delay.

"You are going out, I suppose," said Philip. "You can get the note in ten minutes, if you like. I am always willing to pay ready money for what I buy, I am thankful to say."

Hester would be obliged to him to procure the note, as she could not go out this morning. Meanwhile, she would just sit down at his desk, and write a few lines to her mother.

She did so, while Philip put on his hat and stepped to the Bank. She folded the note into

the letter herself, sealed it, and committed it to the careful Philip to be carried to the post when his own letters should go. This done, she went slowly up to her parlour, drew her drawing-table listlessly into its accustomed light, and spent the rest of the morning in covering a sheet of paper with strokes which to any eye but her own would have meant nothing; but which, falling in her way more than a year afterwards, caused a cold shudder to run through her, by recalling the thoughts that were in her mind while her pencil was thus idly busy.

"My letter is gone, Philip, I suppose?" she enquired at dinner.

"Yes; and mother is saved the postage. I met Edgar just in time. He knew of somebody going through Haleham to-morrow."

"You should always ask me," observed Edgar, "when you have double letters to send. I generally know of somebody going to pass within a reasonable distance of any place you have to write to. I met Horace Berkeley; and he enquired if we had any commands, he intending to go down to-morrow. And if he had not, there is Williamson's traveller, setting off for D—— to-night. You should always give a double letter into my charge."

Hester was not so grateful for such consideration as she would have been a few weeks before. She was vexed and alarmed at her letter having been thus intercepted; but two days set her at ease on this point, by bringing Mrs. Parndon's thankful acknowledgments of the receipt of the

sum sent, and an answer, point by point, to what her daughter's letter contained. It had certainly arrived safe; and Hester reproached herself for suspecting her husband of more villainy than that of which she had proof, and which he defended as being pursued on principle.

Chapter V.

THE WIFE'S OBEDIENCE.

Irksome, beyond all powers of description, was Hester's life from this day forward. It would have been perfectly intolerable but for one circumstance; viz., that not only she loved him for whom she went through daily acts of guilt, and hourly emotions of terror, but that she hoped that he loved her. Watchful and suspicious as she had been made, it appeared to her that Edgar was really touched by the toils and sufferings she underwent for his sake; that with his confidence his affection revived, and that it was really once more a pleasure to him to meet her, and a pain to part from her. This consequence of her participation in his deeds, whether real or imaginary, was little enough of a compensation for the miseries they caused her; but it just sufficed to prevent her sinking,—to sustain her, as she said to herself, till, by some means or other, there should be an end of the long, weary fever fit of her present way of life. The constant presence

of one thought, be it what it may, is enough to make a hell of the mind which it haunts. No artificial torture,—not even the perpetual water-drop,—can cause an equal amount of misery;—of misery which there are few to describe, as most who have felt it in an extraordinary degree are soon numbered in the class of those who can no more give an account of any thing. But many have felt something of this misery; something of the tension of brain which irresistibly impresses the idea of suicide; something of the irritability of nerve which drives the sufferer through air and water, into alternate crowds and solitude, in the vain hope of relief; something of the visions of waking darkness, prolonged from the fancies of the day, and instantly renewed with exaggeration, if sleep comes in answer to the victim's prayer. Probably none have so little horror of madness as those who have been brought acquainted with the misery of a besetting thought: for they are probably the only persons who have prayed for madness,—prayed for it, as the easiest transition from their own, without its suffering. Whether the apparent unconsciousness of madness is in fact exemption from this suffering, there are no means of knowing; since those who have experienced both states are for ever disqualified for making a comparison of them; but, judging from observation, there are few kinds of the moodiest madness which can compare in anguish with the state of one who is engrossed by a single thought, harassed by a single protracted emotion. The punishment of Sisyphus could be

little to it; unless indeed he was condemned to think of nothing but of his stone. He had action to relieve his thought; and varied action, since he had to follow his stone down hill, as well as to push it up. If any part of his punishment reached the acme of suffering, it must have been the unintermitting idea of the toilsome uselessness of his employment. If he was permitted a respite from this consciousness, his torment must have been less severe than that of the wife of a forger who is condemned to pass a certain number of bad notes every day. The very undertaking implies such a degree of attachment as must keep alive the most harassing fear; and what a responsibility to be connected with such a fear! It was almost too much for Hester. If any idea but that of forged notes did find its way into her mind, it was of madness. She told her husband every day that she was becoming stupid, that she was growing nervous, that she was losing her memory, that she could not trust her understanding. She warned him that she became slower and slower in reckoning bills and counting change, and that she should soon be unfit to go to shops at all. She dreamed every night that Edgar was arrested through some mistake of hers, and had some alarming story for him every evening, in which he saw or pretended to see nothing at all.

More of Edgar's security was pretended than Hester was aware of. He saw that her state was such as to render it necessary that every thing should go smoothly at home if she was to

do any good service abroad. She muttered in her sleep about arrest; she turned pale at every footstep overhead; and if such a sound occurred at dinner-time, did the worst thing of all,—stole a glance at Philip, to see if he observed it. She even started at the sight of any crumpled piece of thin paper that might be lying about. The symptom which he least liked, however, was the daily growing reluctance to set about what was now her chief daily business. He was anxious that she should go out early to make her purchases, that she might come home and "be at peace" (as he called it) for the rest of the day: but she put off her excursions, sometimes till the afternoon, sometimes till the evening, while she suffered as much during the intervening hours as if her notes were being at that moment handled and glanced at by a shopman. At last, he had recourse to the plan of settling for her at breakfast-time where she should go, and how far he could walk with her; and this bribe was more effectual than any entreaty whatever.

Hester would sit waiting breakfast, appearing to read the newspaper, but really watching for the opening of the door, and speculating on what kind of mood her husband's might be expected to be, he having been up and hard at work all night at his detestable employment. On these occasions, however, he made his appearance more fresh and smart even than usual, to avoid suspicion. Having given his wife a lively good morning, and looked up at the sky through his glass, and compared his handsome watch with

the no less expensive one he had bought for Hester, he would, with an air of nonchalance, present her with the disgusting roll of notes, which she hastened to put out of sight. Edgar would then sit down to his well-furnished breakfast-table, as if he had the best title in the world to its luxuries, while his wife felt them all to be incumbrances, and was driving away the thought of where she should stow all the further ornaments with which she must go on to fill the house.

"Well, my love," said Edgar, "what is your district to-day?"

"What a very bright morning it is!" was the reply. "This is just the light for finishing my drawing. If I do not go out till the afternoon, I can carry it home; and it is promised this week."

"To-morrow will do for that, my dear; and I have to go into Gracechurch-street after breakfast, and you may as well make that your destination for to-day."

"I have been there so very much lately."

"Have you? Then it is better avoided. What say you to Cheapside?"

"I have twice had a note refused in that neighbourhood, and I never dare go there again."

"You are right. It is surely a long time since you went to the Soho Bazaar."

Hester gasped as she replied that that place was so close, there was no room to breathe,—scarcely any possibility of getting away quickly.

"This is a very fine day for the Park. You

would enjoy a turn there after shopping in Regent-street."

"What else can I buy?" asked Hester, listlessly looking round her. "I have no more room for furniture, and I am tired of getting new things for myself."

"Besides, my dear, you could not wear them. It would not do to make any sudden difference in your appearance out of doors. Indoors it does not signify, as there is nobody to observe you but our own people. Indoors I can have the pleasure of seeing my pretty Hester look as she should do,—graceful and polished as the highest ladies of the land."

"I wonder it gives you pleasure to see me dressed," Hester was going to say; but Edgar proceeded with an explanation that one of her difficulties would soon be removed. She might very soon enlarge the range of her purchases, as Carter had been long enough a traveller for the paper-manufactory in Yorkshire, and was about to open a warehouse near, where Edgar and his friends might deposit and dispose of any purchased articles they might not want for themselves. Hester was glad to hear this. She would send thither immediately the portfolios of prints, which she had no pleasure in looking at, —the rows of handsomely bound books which she could not bring herself to open.

Well, was she ready? her husband wanted to know. He must go, and would set her on her way westwards, if she would put on her bonnet. She did so,—the same bonnet she had worn for

some time, that there might be nothing for the neighbours to remark upon. While on their way, Hester observed that she did hope the shops would not be empty to-day. She lost all her presence of mind when she was the only customer, and there were shop-people standing about to watch her.

"You are always fancying that people are watching you," said Edgar. "They are thinking of no such thing, depend upon it. You have only to take care that you do not put it into their heads. You should do as I do——What has that impudent fellow been following us for, these five minutes? Did you happen to see where he came from?"

"No," whispered the trembling Hester, "but take no notice." And she walked on with an appearance of more self-command than her husband expected of her. He grew more and more fidgety every moment, and presently crossed the street, his apprehended follower trudging on as before, and evidently bestowing no thought on those at whose heels he had accidentally been walking for a minute or two.

"He is not thinking of us," observed Edgar. "That is well."

An idea crossed Hester, which brightened her face surprisingly. "I have just remembered," said she, "I really want something. You say you like rosewood door-handles for the drawing-room better than brass, and it is time we were having the one or the other, and here are some of rosewood in this window. We can get rid of

a note here. Come in and help me to choose a pair."

Edgar was, however, in a prodigious hurry. He was off in a moment. His wife looked after him from the threshold with an unutterable pang. There was no contempt in it. She struggled yet against the belief of his total selfishness. She trusted, she expected to hear at dinner that he really could not spare any more time to her this morning. The next thought was that it really did not signify, as her business in the shop went off easily enough. She had never seen a note more ignorantly handled, more carelessly thrust into the till.

The same impunity attended her everywhere this day. She could have stood firmly by the counters if the seats had all been occupied, and she was not obliged to clasp her hands together in her lap lest their trembling should be observed. In only one instance did any particular attention seem to be paid to a note. One shopman handed it to another, who hastily pronounced by a knowing nod that it was very good; so that Hester received abundance of thanks with her change, and was bowed out of the shop like any one of the enviable purchasers who left it innocent.

It was no new idea to Hester to wish that she might meet with some accident,—something that would prevent her going out for several days, or weeks, or—for ever. She had often asked whether she might not give assistance upstairs, instead of passing notes: but Edgar always put

her off with speeches about staining her pretty fingers with printing ink, or hurting them with the rollers; and sometimes he gave hints that there were people at work there with whom it would be no pleasure to her to associate. She was too honest to think of making herself ill for the sake of evading her task; but she could not be sorry this day when a sudden rain came on while she was in the Park, and wetted her to the skin. She had great hopes of catching a severe cold, and was certainly guilty of not doing her utmost to prevent it, either by keeping herself in exercise during the rain, or using proper precautions when she reached home.

When her husband recurred to their morning's conversation, reminding her that her task would become comparatively easy during the great London season, when the shops would be crowded with customers; when the dreary thought arose how many weeks and months must pass before even this alleviation could be hoped for, it was a pleasure to feel so ill that one week at least would be subtracted from the long series,—seven mornings when she would not have to stimulate her courage up to the point of enterprise, seven nights when she might close her eyes without dreading the waking.

Edgar was vexed almost beyond his patience when he found his wife really ill the next morning. He tried at first to persuade her that air would do her good, and that the amusement of shopping was far better than moping at home. When this would not do, the next thing was to desire

her to have the attendance of a physician immediately, as expense was no object, and her health was of inexpressible importance to him. Hester begged to decline the physician, not choosing to fee him with bad notes, and loathing the idea of following up her occupation within her own doors, during her escape from its exercise without. She trembled too at the idea of admitting any stranger into the house. Her husband thought it would be an advantage, provided every thing suspicious was kept out of sight. The matter was compromised by the apothecary being sent for,—a simple young man who was much affected by Mr. Morrison's extreme anxiety for his wife's recovery, and thereby induced to order her out of doors full three days sooner than he would have done in an ordinary case.

"A lovely day, as you say," observed Edgar. "Mild and sunny, and just fit for an invalid. Would not you recommend Mrs. Morrison to recreate a little in the open air? Consider how long it is she saw any faces but ours."

"I do not want to see any new faces," said Hester. "I cannot bear them yet. All I want is to be alone."

"Aye, aye; a little of the ennui and melancholy of illness, you see, Mr. Cotton."

Mr. Cotton agreed that a little gentle change would be salutary to the nerves, though, as a distressing languor of the frame, and slight frequency of the pulse remained, it would be well not to urge exertion too far.

"I am sure," said Hester, "that if I went out

to-day, I should fall before I could get back from the end of the street."

"But you could not fall if you had a strong arm to hold you up; and I do not mean that you should go alone; of course I would go with you, or Philip."

Hester gave him a look which reminded him of her determination not to implicate her brother in any of her shopping expeditions.

"I am going to have a friend to dine with me," observed Edgar, to Mr. Cotton; "and it would be just the thing for her to saunter to the fruiterer's in the next street, and send in a little dessert, refreshing herself with a bunch of grapes there, you know. I should see a little bloom on her cheeks again when she came home, and then I should begin to think she was going to be herself again. Upon my soul, I don't know how to bear my life while she is shut up in this way."

"I am glad of it," thought Hester; "for now you know something of what my life is when I am not shut up. I suppose you have had enough of shopping."

The apothecary was delighted with the little plan suggested by conjugal solicitude. He immediately prescribed a bunch of grapes, to be eaten at the fruiterer's, and Hester dared not refuse acquiescence. As she expected, her husband went no farther than the door with her; and the boy was presently in waiting to take care of her home.

Just before dinner, Edgar entered, and sat down by his wife, to explain to her, with a smile,

that though he had spoken of a friend coming to dinner, there were really two, and that one of them was to be *her* visiter. Could she guess who it was? Poor Hester named one Haleham friend after another, till her vexed husband stopped her with the news that it was nobody whom she had yet visited, he believed, but one whom she would think it an honour to entertain. There was no occasion in the world for ceremony, however; and this was the reason why he had not told her till now——"

"Well, but who is it?" asked Hester, impatiently.

"Bless me! Hester, how pettish you have grown since you have been ill. One won't be able to speak to you soon. It is Mrs. Cavendish that is coming; but you know you must call her Mrs. Carter. I am glad I have found a friend for you at last, my love. It has been quite an uneasiness to me that you have been moped as you have been of late,—that you have depended so entirely on me——"

"Yes, Edgar, I have depended entirely on you."

"There now, do not grow so nervous the moment one mentions a thing! Never mind about dressing, or about entertaining these people. They know you have been ill, and Mrs. Carter comes to entertain you."

Mrs. Carter came accordingly, with an air of condescending kindness, praised everything she saw, vowed the house and furniture delightful, and protested that the little party at dinner was

just the friendly, intellectual sort of thing she enjoyed above all things, when she could in conscience bring herself to desert her little tribe. She hoped Hester liked London; though she could not be expected to do so to an equal degree with anxious mothers who felt what a deprivation it was to their dear little creatures to be shut up in the narrow circle of a country-town. For her part, she and Mr. Carter often said what a happiness it was,—(though it was a trial at the time,) that they were obliged to leave Haleham when they did. If the Carter estate had happened to fall in to them then, it would (although certainly saving them from some painful circumstances) have been an injury to the children, by keeping them out of the way of the advantages which London alone can afford.

"How long had Mr. Cavendish changed his name?" Hester asked.

"O, my dear, these three years. His dear, good, old great-uncle had lasted wonderfully; but he died at length just three years ago; after all, just in time to make us more comfortable than I assure you we were after the misfortunes that were brought upon us by the stoppage of that unfortunate D—— bank. Aye, you wonder, I dare say, at our coming to live in such a neighbourhood as this, after all, but——"

"I know," said Hester, "Mr. Carter is about to open a warehouse."

"Your lord and master is as communicative and confidential as mine, I see," observed Mrs. Cavendish. "Well, I think we are well off in

our husbands, as I tell my dear little tribe about mine on all occasions. And you should have seen how fond they grew of Mr. Morrison, the first day he came among them, and smiled upon them all, so sweetly! I assure you they have asked many times since when he would come again. And you must come too. I promised my little folks that you would. When your poor dear head is better, you must come and spend a long day with me. It is the nicest thing in the world, our living so near, our husbands being connected as they are. If any little panic rises at any time, here we are to comfort one another. And I assure you I am dreadfully nervous, ever since that unfortunate affair at Haleham. Do you know, I absolutely forget about my husband having let his whiskers grow; and I have screamed three times this week when he has come in between light and dark, taking him for some stranger. I have a horror of strangers now; ever since——"

She could not help perceiving Hester's countenance of misery while she was saying this; so she interrupted herself.

"There now! I have been barbarous enough to make your head ache with my nonsense. Now positively I will hold my tongue; but it is such a luxury to get an hour with an intimate friend, away from my little tribe!"

Edgar disappeared with his guests, at the end of an evening which Hester thought never would come to a close. On his return, some hours after, he found her, not asleep, nor even in bed,

but leaning over the arm of the sofa, from which hung, the locket farmer Williams had given her on the day preceding her marriage,—and weeping bitterly. She tried to speak first, but could not for sobs.

"Why, my poor little woman," said Edgar, after a glance round which quieted his fear that intruders had been there—"my poor little woman! we have quite tired you out to-day; but you should have gone to bed; you should——"

"I could not go," said Hester. "I would not till I had spoken to you, Edgar. I have something that I must say to you."

"Well, well, love; in the morning. It is very late now; and, look ye, the last candle is just burnt out. What could make you wait for me, child, when you know the people overhead were on the watch to let me in? I must make haste and help them. It is a busy night."

"O, no, no. You must stay and hear me," cried Hester, struggling for speech. "I must say it now. Indeed I must."

"Aye; you are going to say what a much better husband that son of Williams's would have made. I know what that locket means, very well. If he had been alive, I should tell you that you ought to have known your own mind when you married me. Since he's dead, there is no more to be said, except that I do wish you would chirp up a little, and not let everybody see that there is something the matter. Do you know, I will not answer for the consequences?"

"Nor I, I am sure," murmured Hester. "I had better go, Edgar; and that is what I was going to say. I have been joining in your plots all this time for your sake. I could not have borne it so long for anybody else. I could go on still, I think, if it was with you alone; but I never promised to have anything to do with—with——"

"With Mrs. Cavendish, from whom you thought it an honour to have a nod at Haleham?"

"She was a respectable person then; or, at least, I supposed she was. And now she comes pretending to be so intimate, and talking about the whole connexion, as if she took for granted that I saw no more harm in it than she does. Edgar, this is too much."

"She is too wise a woman to suit you, you little goose. She sees clearly what I thought I made you understand ages ago;—that we are doing the greatest service to the country by sending out money when it is so much wanted. How often have I told you this, I wonder?"

Very often indeed, Hester allowed: but she did not yet look convinced.

"Well, what is it you wish to do?" inquired Edgar. "Would you have me go and tell Mrs. Carter that you decline the honour of her acquaintance?"

"I had rather you would let me go home."

"And tell farmer Williams all about the arrangements of our second floor, the first time he takes you on his knee, and whispers to you about

the locket. No, madam, it is rather too late for that.'

"I wish you would not call me 'madam.' I cannot bear it. I am sure I have done all you bade me for a long time, and never——and never——"

"Very true, my little wife. It is too bad to treat you like other wives, when you behave so differently from many that I see. I want you too much, and value you too much by far to part with you; and since you do not like Mrs. Carter, I am sorry that I brought her; but I thought it would be a pleasant surprise to you, that was all. Now, give me a kiss, and don't be angry with yourself for being weak-spirited after your illness, and you will sleep it all off, depend upon it."

Hester felt that there was but one sleep that would cure her sorrows; but she did not say exactly this. She threw her arm round Edgar's neck, wailing forth rather than speaking her complaint, that she could not go on with her detestable employment of passing notes. She begged, she implored that this dreadful responsibility might be taken from her, or she would not answer for what she might do. She might throw herself into the river, some day; or go in a fit of desperation to the police, to give information.

Edgar coolly dared her to do the one or the other; and then, protesting that he loved her very much, and wished to be a kind husband, gave her notice that the continuance of his ten-

derness and confidence depended wholly on her doing her duty, as he laid it down for her. Hester was weak,—as she had been a thousand times before. She now deprecated as the crowning evil of all, the withdrawal of her husband's confidence. She promised every thing, under the influence of this threat; allowed herself to be carried to her room; watched for the kiss which she now dreaded would not be given; returned it eagerly; and, as she let her throbbing head sink helplessly on her pillow, found something like comfort in remembering that all must come to an end some time or other.

Chapter VI.

AN ARRANGEMENT.

The purpose of Horace's visit to Haleham was to give his father the comfort of his assistance and sympathy respecting his affairs;—assistance and sympathy which were as much wanted now as they had ever been, from the peculiar condition of the monetary system of the country. There seemed to be no possibility of winding up the affairs,—no end to the hopes that this, and that, and the other incumbrance would be got rid of; and no fulfilment of the hope. The debts went on increasing in actual amount, in proportion to the pains taken to provide funds to

pay them; and the recovery of these funds became, of course, more difficult, as those who owed them suffered under the same disadvantages as the partners of the D—— bank. Day after day, week after week, Mr. Berkeley came home to tell his wife that, after all he had paid, he was, in fact, as deep in debt as ever; while the calls upon the little income allowed him by his creditors were increasing perpetually. His rent, though nominally the same as three years before, was worth full one-third more to his landlord; and, as for taxes, they were exorbitant. There seemed great danger that Mr. Berkeley, loyal as he had always been, would soon be looked upon as a dangerous person in politics by the country gentlemen round, so vehement were his complaints of the excessive taxation of which the government was enjoying the fruits, now that there was no war to be maintained, and every reason for a reduction of the public burdens, from the difficulties which the agricultural and manufacturing classes were encountering in consequence of the sudden contraction of the currency. Mrs. Berkeley was not at all sorry to see his energy directed into the channel of politics. It was better than dwelling perpetually on his private troubles, and she took particular care to show no signs of weariness when Lewis was instructed every evening on the iniquity of double taxation without acknowledgment, or when Henry Craig came to talk about household preparations, and was held by the button for an hour at a time, while the

case of tax-paying labourers was discussed. It pleased her to see her husband's look of satisfaction when Lewis asked sensible questions, or showed the expected degree of astonishment, or confidently pronounced the king's ministers to be good-for-nothing 'chaps; or when Mr. Craig had a case in point to relate which would do to travel round the neighbourhood, growing in pathos and wonder at each delivery. She did not even shrink from the prospect of hearing the whole list repeated to Horace when he should come, so much happier did her husband seem when he had something to rail about, ready made for use, instead of having to invent public grievances, or to brood over private ones. If she could have foreseen all that would arise to be talked about during Horace's visit, she would have feared that there would be too much instead of too little excitement for her husband's comfort.

Horace had not been many hours under his father's roof when Henry Craig came up to see him. This was, in itself, the most natural thing in the world, as they had now long been friends, and were soon to be brothers; but Henry was peculiarly grave; and this was not exactly the occasion on which to appear so. He soon told the reason. He had received a letter from London, inquiring into the moral character of his parish, and requesting to know whether it was at all probable that any family in Haleham was connected with a company of forgers; and if not, whether he could account for a considerable

number of forged notes having been traced back to Haleham persons.

Horace knew something about this. He had more than once, as a Haleham man, had the circumstance mentioned to him in the Clearing-house, where a very sharp scrutiny was exercised into all small notes, from the present extraordinary prevalence of forgery.

"Well, Craig; what do you think?" exclaimed Mr. Berkeley.

"I do not know what to think, sir, in the face of such facts as my letter gives. We have either guilty or deluded people among us, that is very certain; and who they are, and whether deluded or guilty, it must be my business to find out. I hope Horace will help me."

"O, I will help you; and you must trust me to do your business thoroughly. I had some experience in this sort of thing when I was a young man. I got together a mass of evidence about a forgery case,—the completest you ever knew; and, though it was no use after all, as far as the offender was concerned, it was a fine piece of experience for me. If such a thing had to be done over again, you could not do better than put it into my hands."

"How did your labours fail before? What made them useless?"

"The banker was a shabby fellow, and let the rogue go. He did worse than that. He recommended him to a firm in New York; actually shipped him off with a purse of money in his pocket, and a letter of recommendation in his

hand, in which not a hint was given of his delinquency, but his character was set forth in such a light as to induce the New York people to take him."

"Is it possible? And was this to escape the odium and expense of a prosecution?"

"The ostensible reason was that the young man was penitent. And so he might have been for aught I know; but his master knows best how he found that out; for there were but three days to be penitent in. He was shut up with a Bible, after the proofs of his guilt had been shown to him in such a state of completeness as to induce him to confess: and from that solitary room he was taken on board ship at the end of three days; so, penitent or not penitent, his master was perfectly inexcusable in getting rid of him as he did. He turned out very respectably, I have heard, which is an argument against hanging in such a case; but which does not alter the character of his master's conduct. So do not you be wrought upon, Henry, to follow the same method. Even if you find the guilty person under the same roof with yourself, play fairly by the laws and the public safety."

Henry sighed, and observed that it was a difficult and painful matter to be concerned in, disapproving as he did of the wholesale sacrifice of human life made by the law for that species of crime, and yet being fully aware of the guilt and folly of connivance. It was fearful to think of the yearly amount of executions for forgery; —for a crime whose nature was so little under-

stood that the forgers themselves were undoubtedly in some cases convinced that they were rendering a public service in multiplying money, and that strong sympathy for such offenders was excited in the majority of those who witnessed their punishment.

"I know no place more likely than Haleham to share such a delusion," observed Mr. Berkeley. "Every person in it has been talking for these three years of the want of more money; so that it would not be very surprising if somebody should at last have made bold to manufacture a little."

"It will be more surprising, some people say," observed Horace, "if such a manufacture does not go on at an increasing rate, as long as 1*l.* notes are permitted to circulate. I do not know how it is with you in the country, but in London we are now accustomed to hear half the evils of our present commercial state ascribed to the circulation of small notes. If a country bank fails, it is owing to the facility with which issues are made through the channel of a small-note currency. If a case of forgery is mentioned, it would not have taken place if there had been no small notes. Some even go so far as to regard the late fall of prices as an unmixed good, and to anticipate a further fall as one of the benefits to result from the prohibition of small notes."

"How do they account for the failure of country banks previous to 1792, when there were no notes under 5*l.*?" asked Mr. Berkeley. "And why should not the forgery of 1*l.* notes be made

so difficult as to be no longer worth while? And how is it that your wise speculators do not see the difference between the cheapness which arises from plenty, and that which is caused by a scarcity of the circulating medium? I thought the days were past when any one supposed this kind of cheapness to be a good thing."

"It seems a pity," observed Mr. Craig, "to deprive the people of so convenient a kind of currency, if its dangers can be avoided without its abolition. The tremendous increase of forgery is a terrible evil, to be sure; but it is inconceivable that, while the art of engraving is improving every day, a better form might not easily be invented. The very largest of the country banks have suffered little by the forgery of their small notes, because more pains are taken with the engraving; and as it is more hazardous to imitate those of the Bank of England, it seems pretty clear that the practice would cease if the difficulty were brought into a better proportion with the temptation. Will this be done, Horace? or will the small notes be abolished?"

"I rather think they will soon be abolished; and I am very sure that such a measure will not give the expected stability to our country currency, without further precautions. As my father says, there were no notes under 5*l.* in 1792, and yet full one-third of the country banks then in existence failed. Country bankers should be compelled to give security for their issues. There is no other way of keeping the provincial currency in a healthy condition."

"And then," observed Mr. Craig, "it would be as easy to give security for 1*l.* as for 5*l.* notes: and I own I dread the inconvenience to the working classes of withdrawing this part of the currency, let cash payments be resumed as quietly and easily as they may. I suppose there is now no doubt of this resumption."

"It will certainly take place within the year, notwithstanding abundance of prophecies that it will not, and wishes that it may not. I am not among the evil-boders, though I see what scope for complaint the measure will afford to those who are determined to complain. I see that it will add in some degree to the burdens of the labouring classes, and that, for years to come, it will be cried out upon as having increased the amount of taxation, discouraged productive industry, and thus materially injured our public interests: but as these evils are already existing from other causes, and can be only slightly increased by the return to cash payments, I think this the most favourable opportunity for getting back to a convertible currency. If prices were now high, and must be immediately lowered by this measure; if a superabundant currency must be instantly checked; if paper at a depreciation of thirty per cent. were to be suddenly brought to a par with gold, I should lift up my voice as loud as any one against a return to cash payments as the most unjust and the most disastrous measure that was ever meditated; but we all know——"

"We all know," interrupted Mr. Berkeley,

" that prices have long fallen, that the currency is already contracted, and that paper is only three per cent. cheaper than gold, and that these things would have happened if there had been no more talk of cash payments. No wonder corn is cheaper, when we get so much more from abroad since the war ended, and Ireland also has improved in productiveness. No wonder wool is cheaper, when Germany and New Holland have sent us so much more, and of so much better quality than formerly. No wonder our colonial products are cheaper under the change of system by which we are more abundantly supplied. Those who hold themselves in readiness to ascribe the fall of prices to a deficiency in the supply of bullion, and to argue thence against a return to a convertible currency at this time, should look about them and see how great a fall will exist at all events, and how much it will hereafter be fair to attribute to the new Bill."

Horace observed on the difficulty of satisfying a public which had suffered by alterations in the currency. Many of those who were now protesting against the resumption of cash payments were the very same who were clamouring to have the one-pound notes withdrawn, in order to make our provincial circulation more safe, and forgery less common. These were opposed by some who thought the establishment of branch banks would answer the first purpose, and by others who believed that competition would drive out forgery. Never were so many plans afloat for the rectification of the whole business of the currency; and

each plan was thought to involve a remedy for all the evils which had taken place under former systems. The first thing necessary seemed to Horace to be the putting an end to an irresponsible system; the next, the taking care that this action on the currency should be the final one. It might afterwards be ascertained whether the Bank of England should retain any or all of its exclusive privileges, or whether the business of issuing notes should be left free and open to competition, under the natural checks of public and private interest, or any further responsibility to which, by general agreement, the issues should be subjected. It might be left to a period nearer the expiration of the Bank Charter to canvass the advantages of the Scotch banking system as applied to England, and whether the issues should be made from a great national bank, or from many joint-stock banks, or by a chartered company. There were still nearly fifteen years in which to consider these questions; and during which, further fluctuations might possibly arise to indicate new truths on this most important subject. The great present object was to get into a condition for making progress towards a perfect monetary system; and the first great step was, as he believed, to bring the Bank of England into a state of responsibility once more.

"I wish," observed Mrs. Berkeley, "that it was made a part of the responsibility of the Bank of England, that it should not tempt the people to forgery. To be sure, its privileges themselves constitute the greater part of the temptation, as there must

always be the strongest inducement to forge notes which have the widest circulation; but I do wish that to these privileges was appended a condition that its notes should be more difficult of imitation."

Horace thought that such precautions were better left to the interest of the parties concerned. The degrees of complication which should be put into the engravings of notes were not subjects for legislation.

"But it is so painful," observed Mrs. Berkeley, "not only to be afraid of the money that passes through one's hands, but to be made suspicious of one's neighbours, or to be confounded with the dwellers in a suspicious neighbourhood. I do not in the least believe that anybody whom we know in Haleham has been intentionally implicated with forgers; but it is very painful to have such an idea put into one's mind."

"Are you aware," asked Horace of Mr. Craig, "whether any strangers have come to live in Haleham, of late, either openly or covertly?"

Mr. Craig had heard of none. The letter he had received had charged the regular shopkeepers with having held bad notes, and he had a great mind to go to such as had been mentioned to him, and ask where they got such notes.

"Aye, do, without loss of time," said Mr. Berkeley, "and I will go with you. Trust me for sharpening their memories, if they happen to be at a loss. I have a sad memory myself, as my wife will tell you; but I have a method of making the most of other people's."

Mr. Craig at first felt that he would rather

have been without his bustling companion; but it was presently proved that Mr. Berkeley was peculiarly apt at the business of collecting evidence. He was so ready with suggestions, saw so far by means of slight indications, and adapted himself so well to the peculiar humours of the persons he talked with, that he enabled them to remember and comprehend twice as much as they would have done without his help. The linen-draper, who had not till now been aware that he had had a bad note in his hands, was so stupified at learning that one had been traced back to him, that he could not for some time remember from whom he had taken notes within a month, though notes were seldom seen now on his counter. It was Mr. Berkeley who, by happy conjectures, and by frequent returns to one or two fixed points of proof, led him to remember under what circumstances he gave change, in return for what purchase he gave it, when he gave it, and, finally, to whom he gave it. The shoemaker looked back to his books, and by the assistance of Mr. Berkeley's suggestions about dates, brought home the fact to the same person of having paid him in a forged note. The butcher was too confused in the head to be sure of anything; but his stirring, clever wife of her own accord mentioned the same person as having taken change from him that very day.

"There is one other testimony," observed Mr. Craig, "which would end all doubt as to whence the bad notes have come. If Mr. Pye knows that Mrs. Parndon has been paying such away we need inquire no further."

"Will he own it, if he does know it?"

"Certainly. He is both too simple and too upright to conceal what it is important should be known, though no man is more discreet in a matter of confidence."

"Of which kind you do not consider these transactions to be?"

"I assuredly conceive Mrs. Parndon to be as much of a dupe as her shoemaker and butcher. You cannot suppose her guilty of fraud?"

"Nay; I do not know. If she hoarded gold, as I have reason to believe she did, she might——"

"Impossible, my dear Sir. Mrs. Parndon is a selfish and thrifty, but not a fraudulent, person; to say nothing of her having far too little courage to involve herself with sharpers. Shall we hear what Mr. Pye has to say?"

Mr. Pye leaned across his desk, with his hand behind his ear (for he had got thus far in acknowledging his deafness), to listen to the inquiry whether there was much bad money afloat at this time. He had been told that a good deal had been passed in Haleham, though none had come in his way but one note, which had been changed, long ago, by the person who innocently tendered it. He had not the least objection to tell who this person was? O no, not the least, since that note was not one of the present batch of bad ones, and in fact came from London. It was brought down by Mrs. Edgar Morrison; and he wished it was as easy to account for the appearance of the rest.

When Enoch saw the gentlemen look at one another, and heard from them that all the bad money was in course of being traced back to Mrs. Parndon, he stood aghast. He was not so blind as not to see that the probabilities of the case involved either Philip or Edgar, or both; and was chiefly anxious that the women of the family should be exempt from all suspicion of connivance. To his great discomfiture, he was requested by Mr. Craig to undertake the task of ascertaining from Mrs. Parndon from whence she drew her supplies of money, and whether she had any of the same batch remaining. He would not consent to hold a conversation of this nature without a witness, and wished that Mr. Craig alone should attend him, as the very sight of so unusual a visitor as Mr. Berkeley might impede the disclosure which he now saw to be necessary to the vindication of his old friend's character for honesty. Mr. Berkeley therefore gave up with some unwillingness his intended visit to the widow, and staid behind to write to London a report of proceedings thus far, and to collect whatever additional evidence the town would afford.

"Well, gentlemen," exclaimed Mrs. Parndon, as she rose up from weeding her flower-bed at the approach of her visitors, "I am always so glad when I see you two together. To see one's oldest friend and the clergyman keeping company tells well for both; which I am sure Mr. Craig will excuse my saying, since there is such a difference of years between himself and Mr. Pye.

But you will walk in and rest yourselves. O yes, I must not be denied. I saw each of you in the street yesterday, and thought you were coming; and, as I was disappointed of your coming near me then, I cannot let you go now without a word."

She did not perceive that they had no thought of departing without a word; and she continued to multiply her inducements to come in as her friends looked more and more grave in contrast with her cheerfulness. She had no new designs of Hester's to show; for poor Hester had not been very strong of late, and had found drawing make her head ache; but there was a message for Mr. Pye in her last letter, and some inquiries about Miss Melea, which Mr. Craig might like to hear. They would think that she never had anything to offer to her visitors but her daughter's letters, but they knew a mother's heart, and——"

"But do you never hear from your sons?" asked Mr. Craig. "Does your daughter write her husband's and brother's news as well as her own?"

"They write, I dare say," said Mr. Pye, "when times of business come round. On quarter-days, or once in the half-year, perhaps, when remittances have to be sent, Hester gives up the pen to one or other of your sons."

"Not exactly so," replied the widow; "for they have nothing to do with the sending of my pension. That comes from quite another quarter; but on birth-days and Christmas-days——Bless

me, Mr. Pye, what can I have said that delights you so? You look as if you were going to dance for joy."

"So neither Edgar nor Philip sends you money! You have taken a load off my mind, I can tell you. But I was not going to deceive you, I assure you; I was going to tell you what we came for, as soon as I could get courage. But it is all right if you get your remittances from quite another quarter, as you say. Now you have only to tell us what that quarter is, and you are quite safe; for nobody suspected you. Of course, nobody could suspect you."

Mrs. Parndon looked from one face to the other, as she sat opposite to them, unable to make out anything from this explanation of Enoch's rapture. Mr. Craig said, cheerfully,

"So far from wishing to do you any hurt, we come to put you on your guard, and help you to justify yourself in a matter in which you have evidently been imposed upon."

And he proceeded to inform her of several bad notes having been traced back to her, expressing his conviction that nothing more would be necessary to clear herself than to give the date of the arrival of her quarter's money. It was hoped too that she had some left, in order that the remaining notes might be compared with those already issued.

The widow said there must be some great mistake somewhere. Her quarter's money never came in bank-notes; and all that she had lately used came from the hands of her daughter; so

that those who suspected anything wrong were completely out in their reckoning. If the notes were bad, they came, like other bad things, from London; and she supposed no one would take the trouble of tracing them there.

Mr. Craig said he believed it would be necessary for Mrs. Morrison to say where she got them.

"I can tell you that," replied the widow. "She got them from one who takes more bank-notes in a month than I spend in a year. She got them from her brother Philip, I know, on account of a little business she did for me with him. But I shall be very sorry if Philip has to bear the loss, just when his business is falling off, as he says. It would be a great loss, and I should be sorry it should fall upon him now."

"He must do as you do,—recollect and tell where he got the notes," observed Mr. Craig. "Your wisest way will be to show us any that you may have left of the same parcel, and to make a list of their numbers, and of the numbers of those you have parted with. By the help of this list, Philip will be able to trace the whole, I dare say."

Mrs. Parndon was terrified at the idea of being cheated of any of her hoard. She brought out her pocket-book in a great hurry, and produced the remaining notes. There was a ten, good; a five, also good; eleven ones, of which two were good, and all the rest counterfeit. Even she herself now began to see the improbability that Philip had taken so much bad money from chance customers. She turned very pale, and sat down without saying a word.

Enoch buried his face in his hands, and Mr. Craig walked about the room considering what should be done next. At length Mr. Pye gave vent to some of his feelings. He drew near his old friend, and in an agitated whisper declared that Philip must have been taken in by some villain.

"That is very likely," observed his mother. "He never could learn to tell a wise man from a foolish one, or an honest man from a knave. He was always stupid, and unlike the rest of his family; and, now, we shall all have to pay for his dulness."

Mr. Craig now stopped his walk between the door and the window to observe that it was not yet proved that the notes came from Philip.

"No doubt of that," said the widow; "no doubt of that; and I brought this mischief upon him. Not that I knew anything about bad notes. God forbid! That Philip knows best about, and must take upon himself. But if I had but done as I should have done,—if I had but sold my guineas when they were at the highest! I have blamed myself many a time since, for putting that off till I got very little more than they were worth when I laid them by; but I little thought how much harm would come of the delay. O dear! O dear! to think that it is through his own mother that he has got into trouble; and that it might all have been prevented, if I had made a better bargain, and an earlier one! O dear! O dear!"

Enoch besought her not to reproach herself so

bitterly. He could not bear to hear it. She that had been the best of mothers——Indeed he could not bear it. How could she foresee what gold would be worth? and if Philip had got into the hands of sharpers, he would have sent out bad notes through other channels, if his mother had had no remittances to receive. Indeed, indeed, she must not blame herself.

Mr. Craig, who could neither approve of the mixed remorse of one of his companions, nor enter into the flattering sympathies of the other, once more interposed his doubts whether Philip had ever touched the notes on the table; and suggested that as it was certain that the officers of the law were on the track of the forgers, and communications by post would be more tardy than the occasion required, the widow should go up to her children, to be a comfort to them in case of impending misfortune, and a witness of the transaction, as far as she was implicated in it. He was sure that thus only could she obtain any peace of mind while the affair was being investigated. He supposed she would go without delay.

"I go! Bless you, Sir, what could I do? I should be nothing but a trouble to them and everybody. I never had anything to do with such a matter in my life; and to have Philip repenting, and Hester crying, and Edgar looking so angry at me for bringing him into trouble. Bless you, Sir, I am not fit for all this. I am only just fit to sit quiet at home, and think as little as I can of the troubles that are stirring abroad."

"What is Mrs. Morrison fit for, then? There she is, in the very midst of all these troubles;

and is she to look in vain for a mother's support and sympathy?"

"Why, to be sure, poor Hester has been sadly delicate of late, they tell me; and it seems as if she ought to have some one with her. But it cannot be me, because I am sure I could do her no good. I shall write, of course, very often; but still it seems as if she should have somebody with her."

And this was repeated in a louder voice to Mr. Pye, who took the intended hint; assuring the widow that she must not for a moment think of going, and then offering to undertake the journey himself. He explained,—

"You know I am but a poor sort of person to send. The people in London are too much for me now."

O, dear! how could Mr. Pye be so much too modest!

"Besides that I am growing old and fond of quiet," said he, "there is another difficulty that spoils me for a man of business. I find I do not hear quite so well as I did, and this makes me afraid that I am blundering about my business; and that very being afraid makes my ears ring worse than ever; so that I look like an old fool, I know, instead of being fit to be a help to anybody."

This was the first time Enoch had been known to say a word about his deafness. He was now a little confounded at nobody assuring him that it was too trifling to signify. Instead of making a pretty speech like this, Mr. Craig came and sat down to say that he believed Enoch might be

of essential service to the family of his old friend, if he would go prepared to do business in the best manner in his power. If he could not hear without a trumpet, why not use one rather than make blunders, and fancy that he was looking like an old fool?

Mrs. Parndon interposed to protest against such an idea as anybody taking Mr. Pye for an old fool.

"I agree with you," said Mr. Craig, "that it is impossible such a notion should enter any one's mind, if Mr. Pye does himself justice. His trumpet would be a perfect security."

Enoch, much hurt, muttered something about not being bad enough for that yet. He would go, however, and do his best to comfort Hester, to examine into the facts, and to estimate the evidence; and would write to Mrs. Parndon every day during his stay. As she began to melt at this proof of friendship, and to allude to the pains of separation, Mr. Craig thought it was time to leave the old folks to their unrestrained lamentations, and hastened to consult the Berkeleys on the steps which Enoch should be advised to take, on his arrival in London.

"Well, Mr. Pye, so you will write to me every day? Nothing else, I am sure, would support me during your absence and in the midst of affliction." Thus sighed Mrs. Parndon.

Enoch was much gratified, but ventured to speak of the higher supports of which he hoped she was not destitute now, any more than on former occasions of sorrow.

Mrs. Parndon hoped not; but she felt now as

if she had never known sorrow before. She had never before felt quite desolate ; but her daughter, being married away from her, was little better than no daughter at all; and now, if her only son should be disgraced and lost, what would become of her, declining in the vale of years, and weary enough of loneliness without such cares as would henceforth embitter her solitude? These considerations were set forth so variously and so movingly, that the timid Enoch was impelled to do what seemed to him afterwards a very rash thing, though the widow was always ready to assure him that no act could be called rash which had been meditated (as she was sure this had been) for many years. He actually proposed to relieve her of her loneliness and half her cares, and after his long bachelor life, to venture upon a new state for her sake. He had always desired, he protested, to keep himself loose from earthly ties, the more as he felt himself growing older; though it had cost him a frequent struggle when he had felt himself sensibly affected by Mrs. Parndon's kindness; but now it seemed as if heaven had appointed him a further work before he was called away; and he trusted that, in consideration of this, he should be forgiven for resigning himself into a new bondage to the things of this world. Mrs. Parndon enlarged greatly on the advantage of this affair being settled at the present time, as all talk about any impropriety in their corresponding would be obviated by the relation in which they now stood to each other.

At such a crisis as this, Enoch could not, for shame, be touchy or obstinate, even about using a trumpet. He was prevailed on,—not to go and buy one; this was more than was expected or asked,—but to let Mrs. Parndon bring him an assortment into his little back parlour, where he might choose one just to have in his pocket ready for use, if he should meet with any little difficulties on the road, or among the busy, inconsiderate people in London.

With what a swimming head and full heart did Enoch take his way home, to pack up his shirts, and appoint some able substitute to act in his shop, under Mrs. Parndon's eye, in his absence! What a mixture of ideas crowded in upon her, when she had watched him from the door, and returned for a few moments to ruminate in her arm-chair! Her object gained!—the object of so many years, and through the occasion of what she ought to be feeling as a great misfortune. She tried hard to feel it so, and to be melancholy accordingly; but the old proverb about the ill wind would come into her head every moment; and in turns with it occurred an idea of which she really was half-ashamed—that as Parndon and Pye both began with a P, she should not have to alter the marks of her clothes when she married. It was one of the suitabilities which had frequently struck her while meditating the match; and it was too congenial with her sense of aptness not to give her pleasure, even in the first hour of her new prospects.

Chapter VII.

THE WIFE'S RECOMPENSE.

The event which Hester had long contemplated by day, and anticipated in dreams by night, was now impending. Justice had been more speedy in its motions than Mr. Pye; and when he arrived at Hester's abode he found all in confusion. Edgar was lodged in Newgate; Philip had been taken into custody, but released, on its being clearly proved that he had not touched,—that he could not have seen,—Hester's letter to her mother, after she had enclosed in it the good money he had brought in exchange for the guineas. Edgar had intercepted it, and helped himself with a part of the contents, substituting notes, which he thought would do well enough for the Haleham people. Cavendish had been long under suspicion; and the whole gang had been marked out for observation for several weeks, before a great accession of evidence brought on the catastrophe, which every reasonable person concerned must have known to be inevitable. Those who were at work in Edgar's upper rooms were not aware how long they had been watched; how they were followed in the dark hours, when they let themselves in by private keys; how they were looked down upon through the skylight; and how, shut in as they were by oaken doors and a multitude of bolts, stray words of fatal import reached the ears of justice, and the jokes with which they beguiled

their criminal labours were recorded against them. The skylight was as well guarded against the possibility of entrance as they had supposed; but it was found practicable to get so near it as to observe what was going on beneath it: and there were more persons than one who could swear as to which was the flannel jacket that Edgar wore; by what means he cleared his hands of the printing-ink he used; and what part of the delicate process was confided exclusively to him, on account of his peculiar skill. Hester's occupation was also well understood; but she was regarded as being under her husband's control, and neglected by the law as an irresponsible person.

She was sitting, forlorn and alone, in her usual place, when her old friend came to seek her. In this house, where every thing had of late worn an air of closeness and mystery, all was now open to the day. Philip had never been visited by the idea of giving his sister more of his society than usual; he was at work in his shop, as on any other day of the year. The little footboy was the only person to hear and answer, if his mistress should call. The doors were either ajar or stood wide,—the locks and bolts having been forced in the process of storming the house, and nobody thinking of having them mended. Plaster from the walls strewed the passage; some rails of the staircase were broken; the marks of dirty feet were on all the floors. When Enoch went straight up to the top of the house, expecting to find Hester in the farthest corner of her abode, he was struck

to the heart with a feeling very like guilt on seeing around him the wrecks of the unlawful apparatus. Broken jars of ink were on the floor, on which lay also the shivered glass of the sky-light, and the crow-bar with which the door had been forced. A copper-plate remained on the grate over the extinguished coke fire in the furnace. The cupboards had been rifled; and the poker was still stuck in a hole in the wall above the fire-place, through which some fragments of notes had been saved from the burning, after the forgers had believed that they had destroyed in the flames every vestige of the article they were engaged in manufacturing. Enoch gathered himself up as he stood in the middle of this dreary place, afraid of pollution by even the skirts of his coat touching anything that had been handled by the gang. He almost forgot the forlorn one he came to seek in horror at the iniquities of her husband and his associates. At length he recollected that the last place where she would probably be found was in a scene like this, and he descended to the rooms on the first story, though with little expectation of finding anybody there, as the floors were uncarpeted, and the rooms thrown open, as if uninhabited. There, however, retired within a small dressing-room, the only furnished part of that story, he found his young friend sitting, surrounded by the apparatus of employment. She had pen and paper beside her: her work was on her knee; a pencil in her hand; an open book within reach. A slight glance would have given the idea of her

being fully occupied; but a closer observation discovered to Mr. Pye that she was incapable of employment. Never had he felt compassion so painful as when he perceived the tremulousness of her whole frame, and met her swollen eyes, and gazed upon a face which appeared as if it had been steeped in tears for many days. She looked at him in mute agony, her voice being stifled in sobs.

"My poor, unhappy young friend!" cried Enoch, involuntarily adopting the action with which he used to soothe Hester's distresses in her childhood, and pressing her head against his bosom. "My poor child! how we have all been mistaken about you, if this terrible news is true!"

"Oh! it is all true," she replied, "and I ought to bear it better; for I have been expecting it—oh! so very long;—ever since, ever since,—oh! Mr. Pye, you did not know how miserable you made me that day"——

"I make you miserable, my dear! I did not know that I ever made anybody unhappy; and I am sure I did not mean it."

"O no, you could not help it. But do not you remember the bad note the day I left Haleham? I have never had a moment's peace from the hour you put that note into my hands. Nay, do not look so concerned: it was not that one note only; I have seen far, far too many since. I think I have seen nothing else for weeks; and they will be before my eyes, sleeping and waking, as long as I live;—I know they will. Oh, Mr. Pye, I am so wretched!"

Enoch could find nothing to say. Such an expression seemed to him very irreligious; but the countenance before him testified to its being too true. At length he hinted a hope that she found consolation in prayer.

"No," replied Hester. "I am sure I must have been doing very wrong for a long time past; and that spoils the only comfort I could now have. But what could I do? I am sure I punished myself far more than I injured other people by keeping the secret so long. Edgar was my—my husband."

Enoch pronounced a solemn censure on the man who had led an innocent being into guilt as well as misery.

"O do not, do not!" cried Hester. "If you had only seen his wretched look at me when they took him away by that door, you would be more sorry for him than for anybody. I do think that all that is past, and all that is to come, rushed into his mind at that moment; and I am sure you need not wish anybody a worse punishment than the recollection of any one day or night of this dreadful year. But to think of what has to come! and I can do nothing—not the least thing—to save him!"

"Is there no explanation that you can give of any circumstance, my dear, that may be of use to him? Cannot you show how he was drawn in, or give an account of his employments, in a way to soften the case?"

Hester shook her head despairingly. She presently said—

"I am sure I hope they will not ask me any

questions. It would look ill if I made no answer; and if I speak, I never can say anything but the truth. I was always afraid from this that I should be the one to betray Edgar at last; but, thank God! I am spared that."

"He betrayed himself, it appears, my dear. So he is saved the misery of revengeful thoughts in his prison, I hope. How does he support himself?"

"He is very gloomy indeed; and—but I am afraid it is very wrong to think so much about this as I do—he does not love me again as I always thought he would when the time should come for his being unhappy. It was what I looked to through everything. If it had not been for hoping this, I could not have gone on. —O, it is so very hard, after all I have done, that he will not see me; or, if he does for a few minutes, it is almost worse than not meeting."

"Not see you, my dear! that is cruel. But let us hope that it is a sign of repentance. What do you intend to do? Will you go down to Haleham with me? or will you think it your duty to stay here till—till—your husband may wish at last to see you?"

Hester answered, somewhat impatiently, that she did not know what to do. What did it signify now what she did? She hoped it would please God to decide it for her, and not let her live on long in her present wretchedness. Not all Enoch's compassion could induce him to let this pass without rebuke. He schooled her very seriously, though kindly, upon her want of resignation under her griefs; and she bore the reproof

with the docility of a child worn out by its tears, and ready to change its mood through very weariness of that which had been indulged. She could not yet see, however, that her next duty would lead her to Haleham, or say that she wished her mother to come to her. She must remain where she was, and alone, at least till the trial.

Enoch took care that she should not have more entire solitude than was good for her. He spent many hours of each day with her, striving to interest her in whatever might turn her thoughts from the horrors which impended. He did win a smile from her with the news of his intended relationship to her, and led her to inquire about Rhoda Martin, and a few other old companions in whose happiness she had been wont to feel an interest. He did not despair of prevailing on her in time to settle among them. He did not venture to say anywhere but in his own mind, that her love for such a selfish wretch as Edgar must wear out; and, with her love, much of her grief. If she could be settled among the scenes of her happy youth, he did not despair of seeing her cheerfulness return, and her worn spirit resuming the healthiness of tone which had given way under too protracted a trial. He was grieved to find that she was weak; but surely weakness never was more excusable than in her case; and there was hope that tender treatment might yet fortify her mind when her sore trial should be over, and the impression of present events in some degree worn out.

Mr. Pye's exertions were not confined to watching and soothing Hester. Everything that could be done towards providing for Edgar's defence, and preventing Philip's character from being injured, was achieved by the old man with a vigour and discretion which astonished all who judged of him by first appearances,—who looked at his brown coat and close wig, and took him for a person too much given to enlarge upon one set of important subjects to have any talent to spare for matters of business.

In consideration of his exertions for her children, Mrs. Parndon waived her delicate scruples about being seen to interfere in Mr. Pye's concerns. She repaired to his abode every morning to rehearse her future duties; and the shop was never better conducted than while she superintended its business from the little back parlour. If it had not been for her own engrossing prospects, she would have severely felt the mortification of having Hester's marriage known to be an unhappy one. As it was, she had some trouble in bringing her spirits down to the proper point of depression, when it was at length ascertained that there was no room for hope; and that she must prepare to receive her miserable daughter, widowed in so dreadful a manner as to set all sympathy at defiance, and make even a mother dread to offer consolations which could appear little better than a mockery.

There was even a deeper curiosity in Haleham about the fate of Cavendish than that of Edgar. Cavendish's genius, however, proved equal to all

emergencies. It ever appeared to rise with the occasion. By means best known to himself, he obtained tidings of the stirrings of justice in time to step quietly on board an American packet, and to be out of reach of pursuit before his ac complices and favourite pupil were stormed amidst their fortifications. His wife had hysterics, of course, in proportion to the occasion; and, of course, became eager in a short time to secure for her children those advantages of education and society which could only be found in another hemisphere. The family are now flourishing at New York, where, by their own account, are concentered all the talents and virtues requisite to a due appreciation of the genius of Mr. Cavendish, the accomplishments of Mrs. Cavendish, and the respective brilliant qualities of all the Masters and Misses Cavendish. The name of Carter is dropped, as it had been mixed up rather conspicuously with the awkward affair of the forgery. The Carter estate is supposed to have vanished with it, as Mr. Cavendish's agent has no instructions about transmitting the proceeds.

Philip got out of the affair with as little injury as could be expected. Before the trial, he rubbed his forehead ten times a day, as the anxious thought recurred that his house was probably in too evil repute to be easily let. This objection was, however, speedily got over, as it was a convenient and well-situated abode; so that its owner is visited by only very endurable regrets for the past. The opening of his private shop-door some-

times reminds him how odd it is that he should expect to hear Hester's footstep when she is as far off as Haleham, and he has occasionally a sigh and a mutter to spare for poor Edgar; but as he finds himself little the worse for the jeopardy he was placed in, he persuades himself that the less he thinks of uncomfortable things that cannot be helped, the better. He remembers enough, however, to make him cautious. It was exceedingly disagreeable to have to shut up shop, and be idle and melancholy on the day of the execution; and a terrible nuisance to have ballad-venders coming for weeks afterwards to cry Morrison's dying confession under the window, in hopes of being bought off. To guard against these things happening again, he looks sharp to detect in his lodgers any attachment to double oak-doors and grated sky-lights.

Chapter VIII.

ARRANGEMENTS COMPLETED.

The first person who succeeded in obtaining access to Hester was Rhoda Martin. The reason of this was the peculiar sympathy which arises between companions on the apparent opposition of their fates. Rhoda had believed Hester prosperous while she herself was suffering; and now she was beginning to be happy just when her friend's peace seemed to be overthrown for ever.

Rhoda was at last going to be married to her lover; and the relief from suspense was all the more enjoyed from its having of late appeared almost impossible but that times must grow worse with farmer Martin and all his connexions. All the farmers,—everybody who had more to sell than to buy,—were discontented with the times; and, above all, complaining that a fixed character had been given to their adversity by the operations of the Bank of England on the currency. Cash payments had been resumed; and just after, there was an evident relaxation of industry, an increase of difficulty in the various processes of exchange, and a consequent depression in all branches of manufactures and commerce. To what extent this would have happened without the return to cash payments, no one could positively say, though most allowed, because they could not deny, that there had been an increasing and disastrous rise in the value of money for a long time past, which must be referred to a former action on the currency.

There were some who, whatever they might think of the causes of the present pressure upon large classes of society, believed themselves bound in conscience to quit the letter in order to preserve the spirit of their contracts, and that the proper time for doing this was at the moment when the convertibility of the Bank of England paper was re-established. Among these was the land-owner who had Martin for a tenant. Generously forgetting that, in the days of a depreciated currency, his tenants had paid him no more than

the nominal value of his rent, he now proposed to them that they should pay him one-third less than that nominal value. This which, he called justice, his tenants were nearly as ready as his admiring friends to call generosity; and all agreed in blaming the system under which justice assumed the character of generosity; or, in other words, under which injustice might take place as a matter of course.

No one was more sensible than Rhoda of the merits of her father's landlord on this occasion, for to them she owed the conclusion of her long suspense. A part of what her father would have paid as rent to a grasping or thoughtless landlord, he could now spare to enable his daughter to marry. A small yearly allowance was sufficient, in addition to Chapman's wages, to justify their coming together, hoping, as they did, that affairs would work round to a better and more stable condition, from people being convinced of the evils of a fluctuating currency, and resolved to let the circulating medium adjust itself perpetually, under such checks only as should be necessary as safeguards against fraud and rashness. Everybody hoped that the matter was so settled as to leave men's minds at liberty to decide, in the course of the next fourteen years, whether the peculiar privileges of the Bank of England should be renewed on the expiration of its charter, or whether any new system of issuing money should be resorted to which might obviate any recurrence of past evils, without introducing any fresh ones. The very badness

of the state of affairs in 1819 afforded hope that nothing worse could happen before 1833. So Chapman married, hoping for a gradual rise of wages, in proportion to the gradual rise of prices which his father-in-law looked to from the safe and cautious expansion of the currency which circumstances would soon demand. They were far from anticipating more crises like those the country had undergone. They could not have believed, if they had been told, that in defiance of all the teachings of experience, there would ere long be another intoxication of the public mind from an overflow of currency, another panic, and, as a consequence, another sudden and excessive contraction. Still less would they have believed that the distress consequent on these further fluctuations would be ascribed by many to the return to cash payments in 1819.

Martin's landlord was not the only person in the neighbourhood of Haleham who behaved honourably about the fulfilment of a contract under changed conditions. Mr. Berkeley's creditors put an end to liabilities which he had declared every day for months past to be endless. With all his toil and all his care, the task of paying his debts seemed to become heavier and more hopeless with every effort. Not only did he feel like the inexperienced climber of a mountain, to whom it seems that the ascent is lengthened in proportion as he passes over more ground. In his case, it was as if the mountain did actually grow, while the unhappy man who had bound

himself to reach the top, could only hope that it would stop growing before his strength was utterly spent. As welcome as it would be to such a climber to be told that he had engaged only to attain a certain altitude, and having reached it, need go no farther, was it to Mr. Berkeley to be suddenly absolved from his liabilities in consideration of his having paid in fact, though not in name, all that he owed. The only hope that had for some time remained of his being released with perfect satisfaction to himself and his creditors lay in the recovery of a debt which had been owing to the family from abroad for a series of years. While money had been only too plentiful at home, it was not thought worth while to incur the expense of a foreign agency to recover a debt which would be paid in a depreciated currency; but now the case was altered: the agency would cost no more, and the recovered money would be full one-third more valuable; and efforts were accordingly made to obtain payment. But for the hope of this, Mr. Berkeley's spirits would have sunk long before. As it was, he took his way to D—— with more and more reluctance week by week, and month by month. He said oftener by his own fire-side that he clearly foresaw his fate,—after a long life of honourable toil, to die in debt through the fault of the money-system under which he had had the misfortune to live. The best news his family looked for from him was that his affairs were standing still. I was much more frequently the case that disappointment came from some quarter whence

money was looked for, and that part of a debt remained which it had been hoped would have been cleared off.

A few days before Melea's long-delayed marriage,—the day when Fanny was expected home for a short visit, a day when expectations of various kinds kept the family in a particularly quiet mood, Mr. Berkeley came home to dinner from D——, looking very unlike the Mr. Berkeley of late years. His wife was at work at the window, whence she could see some way down the road. Henry Craig was by Melea's side, comfortably established for the day, as it was impossible that he could depart without having seen Fanny. Lewis was gardening under the window, so busily that he never once looked up till desired to meet his uncle at the gate, and take his horse. Melea, half-rising, began her habitual involuntary observation of his mode of approach. She did not know how to interpret it. His hands were in his pockets, and his walk was slow, as usual; but he looked above and around him, which was a long-forsaken habit. He came straight in through the open doors, with his hat on, silently kissed his wife and daughter, pressed Craig's hand, and, sitting down by the table, rested his head on his arms and wept passionately. The dismay of the whole party was inexpressible. It was long before their soothings, their respectful and tender caresses, had any other effect than to increase his emotion; and before he could command himself to speak, they had had time to conceive of every possible misfortune that could

befall them. Melea had passed her arm within Henry's, as if to ask his support under whatever might be impending, and was anxiously glancing towards her mother's pale and grave face, when the necessary relief came.

"Do forgive me," exclaimed Mr. Berkeley, feebly. "I have no bad news for you."

"Then I am sure you have some very good," cried Melea, sinking into a chair.

"Thank God! I have. It is all over, my dear wife. We are free, and with honour. I need never set foot in D—— again, unless I like. Ah! you don't believe me, I see: but they are the noblest fellows,—those creditors! Well, well; never mind if I did not always say so. I say so now. They are the noblest fellows!"

"For forgiving you the remainder of your engagements?"

"No, no. That is the best of it,—the beauty of the whole transaction. They say,—and to be sure it is true enough,—they say that we have paid everything, and more than paid; and that they could not in conscience take a farthing more. And yet the law would give them a good deal more;—more than I could ever pay."

"So you are out of debt, my love," observed Mrs. Berkeley: "not only free, but having paid in full. It is not freedom given as a matter of favour. Now we may be happy."

"But surely," said Melea, "we shall always regard it as an act of favour,—of generosity. I am sure I shall always wish so to regard it."

"Certainly, my love: so shall we all. I shall

never rest till I have told them my feelings upon it far more intelligibly than I could at the time. It was their fault that I could not. They overcame me completely.—But you have not heard half the story yet. They leave me my life-insurance, which I gave over for lost long ago; and they turn over that troublesome foreign debt to me to deal with as I think fit. When we have recovered that——"

'Do you really expect to recover it?"

"Lord bless you! to be sure I do. No doubt in the world of that; and a very pretty thing it will be, I can tell you. With that, and the debts that remain to be got in nearer home, we shall be quite rich, my dear; quite independent of our children's help, who will want for themselves all they can get. And then, this life-insurance! It is a pretty thing to have to leave to them. What a capital piece of news to tell Fanny when she sets her foot on the threshold to-night,—that she is not to leave home any more! I thought of it all the way home."

"My dear father!"

"My dear girl, what can be more rational? You don't think I shall let her———You forget that I shall want her at home more than ever now. I shall have nothing to do henceforward, but what you put into my head. No more rides to D——, thank God!"

"No," said Melea, smiling; "we shall see you turn into the quiet old gentleman, I suppose; basking in the garden, or dozing in the chimney corner? Father, do you really suppose you will subside into this kind of life?"

"Why, I cannot tell till I try. To be sure, there is a good deal to be done first. The whole management of the jail yonder wants setting to rights, from the lowest department to the highest. Then, the funds of the Blind Charity——"

"But you are never to set foot in D—— again, you know."

"Aye, aye. That is on the side where the bank stands. Enter it by the other end, and it is not like the same place, you know. Surely, child, you cannot expect me to sit at home all day, catching flies to keep myself awake?"

Melea disclaimed any such wish or expectation.

"Poor Lewis must be taken better care of now," continued Mr. Berkeley. "We must look about us to see how he is to be settled in life. What shall we do with you, Lewis? Choose anything but to be in a bank, my boy. Choose anything else, and we will see what we can do for you."

"You need not choose at this very moment," said Melea, laughing, observing that Lewis looked from his uncle to his aunt, and then to Mr. Craig. "My father will give you a little time to think about it, I dare say."

"Why, one must; but it is rather a pity," said Mr. Berkeley, half-laughing. "This is one of the days,—with me at least,—when one sees everything so easily and clearly, that it seems a pity not to get everything settled."

Mr. Craig mentioned as a matter of regret that it was past twelve o'clock,—too late to have Melea married on this bright day. Mr. Berkeley

joined in the laugh at his predilection for despatch.

It proved, however, that there was less need of haste in laying hold of a bright season than formerly. The brightness did not pass away from Mr. Berkeley's mind with the few hours which he had assigned as its duration. The next day and the next, and even Melea's wedding-day, brought no clouds over the future, as it lay before his gaze. He could even see now that the same changes which had injured his fortunes had not been without advantage to some of his family. Horace had saved more from his salary every year. Mr. Craig found his curacy an advantageous one in comparison with what it had formerly been, though there was no alteration in the terms on which he held it; and his school was made to answer very well, though its terms were nominally lowered to meet the exigencies of the time. Fanny and Melea had been able to contribute from their stipends more than they had anticipated to the comfort of their parents, besides having a little fund at their disposal when they took their places, the one at her father's fireside, and the other at the head of her husband's establishment. Some years before, the stipends of all would have barely sufficed for their own immediate wants. If their father suffered extensive injuries under the system which all saw was wrong, it was certain that his children derived some, though not a counterbalancing, advantage from it.

Other very bright lights spread themselves

over Mr. Berkeley's future as often as he thought of the restoration of his daughters to his neighbourhood. All his convictions of the pitiableness of such a marriage as Melea's melted away in the sunshine of her countenance; and when he looked forward to the perpetual morning and evening greetings of his elder daughter, he declared that he expected to be perfectly happy till his dying day;—perfectly happy in a state far inferior to that which he had quitted for something better;—perfectly happy without the mansion, the rosary, the library, which he had found insufficient in addition to all that he now possessed. His family knew him too well to hope that he would ever be perfectly happy; but they perceived that there was hope of a nearer approximation to such a state than before his adversity; and this was enough for their happiness.

Mr. Pye and Mrs. Parndon had fixed the same day for their wedding that was to unite Mr. Craig and Melea. While the Berkeley family were amusing themselves with this coincidence, however, the fact got abroad, as such things do; and the consequence was that Enoch came in an agony of humility to beg pardon, and change the day. His only idea had been to defer it for a week or so, till Mr. Craig should have returned from his wedding excursion; but Mrs. Parndon proved, as usual, the cleverest planner of the two. She observed on the decorum of the older couple being married first, and on the advantage of deviating only one day from the proposed time, instead of a whole week. They were therefore

married the day before the young people, and Mrs. Pye's seed-cake and currant-wine were pronounced upon before Mrs. Craig's doors were thrown open to the friends who came to wish her the happiness she deserved. There were smiles in abundance in both cases;—of wonder at the resolution with which Mr. Pye handled his trumpet, and of amusement at the pretty and proper bashfulness of his bride:—smiles also of true sympathy and joy in the happiness of the young pair, who by having been, as far as they could, the benefactors of all, had come to be regarded as in some sort the property of all. Even Hester felt as if they belonged to her, and must have her best wishes. Even she could smile when she offered those wishes; and the first long conversation she held was with Fanny on the past trials of these lovers, and on their future prospects. During this her temporary cheerfulness,—which afforded promise of a more permanent state of it,—there was not a grave face in any house in Haleham where the Craigs and the Berkeleys were known. It was a considerable time before Mr. Berkeley found the want of something to do. Congratulation was now a welcome novelty, the zest of which he owed to his past troubles; and every one who observed his quick step in the streets of Haleham, and his indefatigable vigour in acknowledging the attentions of its inhabitants, perceived how he enjoyed this novelty. He liked to be told that he had taken a new lease of life on the marriage of his daughter; and, except that of his many schemes none were of great magnitude, it

might have appeared that he took the assurance for fact. His family were, however, fully aware that his plans were all such as might be easily resigned, though they gave an aspect of youthful activity to his advancing age.

SUMMARY

Of Principles illustrated in this and the preceding Volume.

In proportion as the processes of exchange become extensive and complicated, all practicable economy of time, trouble and expense, in the use of a circulating medium, becomes desirable.

Such economy is accomplished by making acknowledgments of debt circulate in the place of the actual payment: that is, substituting credit, as represented by bank-paper, for gold money.

The adoption of paper money saves time by making the largest sums as easily payable as the smallest.

It saves trouble by being more easily transferable than metal money.

It saves expense by its production being less costly than that of metal money, and by its setting free a quantity of gold to be used in other articles of production.

A further advantage of paper money is, that its destruction causes no diminution of real wealth, like the destruction of gold and silver coin; the one being only a representative of value,—the other also a commodity.

The remaining requisites of a medium of exchange, viz.—that it should be what all sellers are willing to re-

ceive, and little liable to fluctuations of value,—are not inherent in paper as they are in metallic money.

But they may be obtained by rendering paper money convertible into metallic money, by limiting in other ways the quantity issued, and by guarding against forgery.

Great evils, in the midst of many advantages, have arisen out of the use of paper money, from the neglect of measures of security, or from the adoption of such as have proved false. Issues of inconvertible paper money have been allowed to a large extent, unguarded by any restriction as to the quantity issued.

As the issuing of paper money is a profitable business, the issue naturally became excessive when the check of convertibility was removed, while banking credit was not backed by sufficient security.

The immediate consequences of a superabundance of money, are a rise of prices, an alteration in the conditions of contracts, and a consequent injury to commercial credit.

Its ulterior consequences are, a still stronger shock to commercial credit, the extensive ruin of individuals, and an excessive contraction of the currency, yet more injurious than its excessive expansion.

These evils arise from buyers and sellers bearing an unequal relation to the quantity of money in the market.

If all sold as much as they bought, and no more, and if the prices of all commodities rose and fell in exact proportion, all exchangers would be affected alike by the increase or diminution of the supply of money. But this is an impossible case; and therefore any action on the currency involves injury to some, while it affords advantage to others.

A sudden or excessive contraction of the currency produces some effects exactly the reverse of the effects of a sudden or excessive expansion. It lowers prices, and vitiates contracts, to the loss of the opposite contracting party.

But the infliction of reverse evils does not compensate for the former infliction. A second action on the currency, though unavoidably following the first, is not a reparation, but a new misfortune.

Because, the parties who are now enriched are seldom the same that were impoverished by a former change; and *vice versâ*: while all suffer from the injury to commercial credit which follows upon every arbitrary change.

All the evils which have arisen from acting arbitrarily upon the currency, prove that no such arbitrary action can repair past injuries, while it must inevitably produce further mischief.

They do not prove that liability to fluctuation is an inherent quality of paper money, and that a metallic currency is therefore the best circulating medium.

They do prove that commercial prosperity depends on the natural laws of demand and supply being allowed to work freely in relation to the circulating medium.

The means of securing their full operation remain to be decided upon and tried.

THE END.


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